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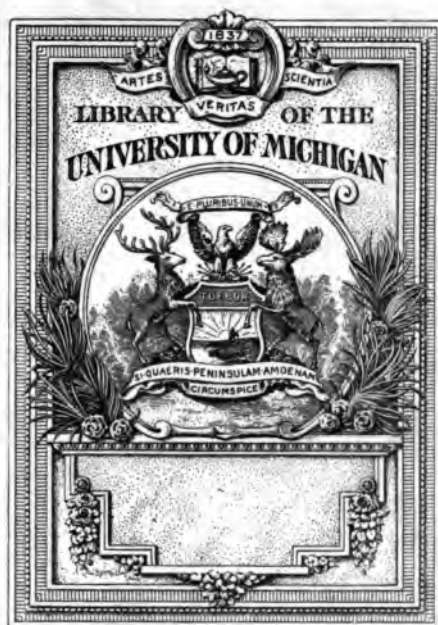
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**THE HEART OF THE  
NORTHERN SEA**





# THE HEART OF THE NORTHERN SEA

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*Miss*  
By <sup>^</sup>ALVIDE PRYDZ

*Translated from the Fifth Norwegian Edition by*  
TYRA ENGDAHL & JESSIE REW

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*"Préservez-moi, mon Dieu !  
La mer est si grande,  
Et ma barque est si petite !"*  
—FOLK-SONG OF BRITTANY.

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LONDON  
GEORGE ALLEN  
1907



Gunvor Thorsdottir till Härö

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Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co.  
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

TO  
*THE PEOPLE & THE SEA*  
IN THE NORTH

137365



## PREFACE

THIS novel was published in the original Norwegian under the title of *Gunnvor Thorsdotter till Härö*, and was received with much enthusiasm throughout the Scandinavian countries, where the authoress, Alvide Prydz, holds a high place in the field of literature. She has been acknowledged by Björnstjerne Björnson and Henrik Ibsen as the greatest woman writer of her country. Also her works have been translated and published in America, Germany, Russia, and Holland, and have received unstinted praise from the press of those countries.

Alvide Prydz is descended on the paternal side from an old East German noble family, and her mother is the daughter of Skovgaard, a well-known Danish landscape painter. She was born in 1848 at her father's estate of Tosterud, near Swaalenene in the south of Norway, "where," she says, "I began an early intercourse with nature, and dreamed my first overwhelming dreams as I wandered in the woods and old gardens. There I lived

## Preface

a life of the imagination—even at the age of five—and this seemed to me the only true one.” When she was fourteen years old her family, having suffered from pecuniary losses, were obliged to remove to Christiania, and here she has spent the greater part of her life. As a young girl she lived for a short time at a place on the north-west coast of Norway; it was during this period that the influence of that strange country and its strange sea-people determined her choice of a career. She resolved to be the exponent of Life and Nature as she saw it here.

Miss Prydz has been three times the recipient of public grants of money, which have enabled her to travel in Germany, Austria, France, and Italy, and much of her work has been done during visits to Palermo and the Riviera. Hence the glimpses of the sunny south she gives us, while weaving the main threads of her stories into soul pictures of “the people and the sea in the north.”

Her best known novels are *Gunvor Thorsdotter of Härö*, *The Children of Härö*, and *The Promised Land*. She has also produced a dramatic work entitled *Undine*.

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# The Heart of the Northern Sea

## CHAPTER I

### THE HAERO FAMILY

**I**T is gloomy winter in the North, and the shadows lie dreaming.

Since autumn the stormy weather has been relentless, coming from the region of eternal ice and from the great waters to the southwest. It has come swooping down on the waves, and chasing them over the depths, shrieking the while. And the sea has been stirred to its lowest, deepest abysses; its waves raged fathoms high as it dashed its hissing foam in over the shore, presaging a harvest of pain to all the world.

The wind of the Polar Sea is fiercer than all others. Far inland it continues its wild, shrill career, cleaving the air with ice-gleaming swords, and filling every corner of the small, low houses with its cold breath. To escape it is impossible. 'Tis vain to cover yourself in down and fur.



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It is as if a cold hand tore off your clothes, as if it stroked your naked body and stole the warmth from your blood.

And when it is daring its worst, it lifts the roofs from the small, low houses that are in its way and breaks them to pieces. It makes strong walls to totter, and whistles, icy cold, through chimneys, piercing its way through every crack. But its fury never lasts long. Suddenly it relaxes and sobers down into a wind of ordinary passions, that whirls round the walls of the houses and whizzes through the cracks—icy, but like other winds.

It may happen that it stays away altogether, that it falls down and dies, still as a beast, and instead, the fog comes from the sea and covers the earth like a shroud, then lifts, and fills the sky with dimness, making land and sea alike a trackless waste. Then men and beasts grow weary, and look for help from one of the Spirits of the Wind. Cannot old Is-far or Knut of the south-west come and clear the sky for them ?

. . . . .  
Haero stands near the edge of the open sea. A few bird-haunted rocks break the long sea waves, and there is a fairly sheltered harbour ; but up on the cliffs at the old manor-house of Haero you have the winds at first hand.

## The Haero Family

If, however, they strike the walls rather roughly, there is quietness under the thick rafters—and such walls as those of Haero are not to be found nowadays, people say.

The exact date of the old building is not known, but without doubt it is hundreds of years since the first Thor of Haero built the old family mansion, and lived and reigned there as a king. There are still legends of what happened of evil and of good in the time of the Haero kings. Now there is silence. The ancient traditions are broken. During the later generations the lords and merchants of Haero, by uncontrolled love of pleasure, impaired the strength of the family and squandered its great riches. But veneration for the old name has passed into people's blood. When they approach the old mansion there are still some of the older men who lift their caps, and to the young ones, whose imagination has been fired with tales of its past glory—no place can be like the manor-house at Haero, and no woman like Fru Elin.

As long as people can remember, the mistress of Haero has been a woman to inspire the deepest respect. As is often the case in old families, the vigour of the race was still alive in the women long after it had deserted the men. The mistresses of Haero have

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always been of Haero blood, and many a Sigrid of the Strong Hand has been among them.

Fru Elin was a woman not easily satisfied. From the time when she first undertook the management of everything, none of the servants ever felt quite at their ease. She was upon them like a tempest when they did not in the least expect her.

Then changes took place at Haero. The life of idleness and amusement indulged in by the later generations was over. No longer were there yachts filled with guests going to and fro. All things of value were sold, and the last Thor left was a miserable, tottering old man, who met the changed state of affairs with a dull surprise at the fact that he had been spared the fate of going homeless from the lands of his forefathers.

He had lived on there until last autumn, when his feeble life was extinguished by the first cold wind. He was buried with due honour. Hundreds of people from town and country followed to his grave. Some years ago nobody would have thought that he would go to his last resting-place with so much splendour. But it was Fru Elin who saw to this; she upheld the dignity of her family.

After that event quietness reigned there.

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Two of the sons were dead, having been struck down in early manhood ; the two others had obtained a mortgage on the massive carved furniture and the heavy old silver, and had gone to America with the money.

Then Fru Elin and her daughter Gunvor were left there with the debts to pay. But with brave hearts they had begun to work ; the estate began to repay their efforts at developing the trade in fish. And there was still a glamour over the old place ; it was as though there yet remained some of its past greatness both within and without.

There was something strange about it all—a detachment from the outer world—that was in keeping with the great self-dependence with which the mistresses of Haero had held their place. Now it was peaceful inside the old homestead. Under the high arched roof the silence lingered. The oak doors glided slowly on their hinges ; the old, heavy brass latches had become stiff during the last few years. But nothing was to be changed. There had been enough changes at Haero.

To Fru Elin changes were always for the worse.

Steps with massive balustrades led down to the enclosed courtyard, and on the opposite side, to the garden with the old ash-trees

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behind the wall, looking towards the sea. The garden was still laid out in the same terraces as three hundred years ago, with the same close-clipped hedges and the same great clusters of heracleum and rhubarb.

From the four spire-like summer houses at the corners of the garden one could look out over the sea. The slope down to the shore was terraced with moss-grown stonework, in mouldering masses. In the moonlight it looked as if lines of spectres were threatening the house; between their lifted arms and massive heads one could see the waves.

Down at the shore Alec of the Isle is the industrial headquarters. There is a good harbour and a rich supply of herring and other fish. At the office inside the place of business Gunvor was to be found every morning. The glance of her young, keen eye seemed to penetrate everywhere, and her own obvious goodness induced honesty in others.

People ceased to wonder at the place being altogether changed.

They saw there was a new Gunvor of the family better than any that had gone before; with all her severity there was something in her that had not often been found at Haero. Young people thought this attitude of consideration for all around her very natural, but

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the old ones found it strange to see one of the Haero family going in and out of the cottages where life was often a dark and dreary state. No one could complain of Fru Elin. If she ruled without indulgence, she meant to do her duty and helped those in distress. But there was something out of the ordinary in her daughter. And there, on the shore of the isles, many little children had begun to call her "mother." A new Haero had arisen with two mothers for the people instead of one.

In the sitting-room, in front of the great stove fireplace, Fru Elin was sitting spinning. The big iron doors of the stove were open, so that one could look in upon the logs of dry wood and peat. On a footstool beside her Aunt Vikka sat carding wool—silent, with firmly-pressed lips and a certain nervous accuracy, for Fru Elin was not easily satisfied.

Fru Elin is also somewhat hard of hearing. But as she would not for all the world admit this, they often sit talking without understanding each other. Therefore Aunt Vikka likes best to sit quite silent. She is easily moved to tears, is Aunt Vikka. The tears seem always waiting behind her eyes ready to gush out. This is a painful habit, and so it is pleasanter when there is silence.

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Aunt Vikka is a relation who has not a home of her own to shelter her. She has got it into her head that she is always in people's way, and that she is taking somebody's place. People think that she exaggerates; but there is something in it—there has, in fact, never been a place for her.

She had come up for a visit from Glückstad's, the merchant's, and then she had stayed on, for she got on more comfortably here. Down there the daughter had begun to be disagreeable to her, and the boys had always made fun of her. Here it was easier for her; Fru Elin was just and Gunvor kind.

Aunt Vikka had cried much in her life, and she had a habit of sitting and shaking her head at all that was evil. When she let the cards rest a moment, she still sat bent forward and shook her small, white head and gazed into the fire, winking her nervous, trembling eyelids.

Fru Elin is over sixty, but her body is straight and her eyes are clear and intelligent. She is always dressed in black; it adds to the air of rather heavy dignity about her. This mourning garb does not betoken sorrow for her husband; when people call to mind that that Thor of Haero was one of the worst of his race, they can understand

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this. What Fru Elin had passed through was on everybody's tongue; they considered it wonderful that she had survived it. A human being's strength comes from the Lord, they said.

This may be taken in more than one sense, but in the sense in which people meant it, it was wrong. Fru Elin, for her part, had never had any need of what she called religion, but she was particularly anxious that her servants and the people in the neighbourhood should hold fast to God. She considered it necessary for them; she saw how they were situated. They need a God in the boat and in the small, low houses on dark nights in winter. She had just been talking of religion with Aunt Vikka, and she had reasoned rather hotly in her taciturn way—for it was necessary for Aunt Vikka to have a God. It would not do for her to doubt God's love. She had not strength enough for this, Aunt Vikka; she would go mad. If there were not a place of honour waiting for her among the heavenly mansions, what would she do with her poor harassed life? And Aunt Vikka had received the reprimand with mild distress. She had not meant it so; she knew that she had thanked God as well as she could



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for all—and He did not want more from her.

The dry wood crackled and snapped, the firelight flashed through the darkness straight up to the picture of the Last Judgment, that hung over the sofa among prophets and prophetesses.

So complete a stillness reigned in the room, that the long sighs of the sea stole in and sometimes the lonely cry of a bird.

Aunt Vikka rose, went to the pot under the cabinet, and took a handful of dried rose and lavender leaves. She never failed to throw these on the fire at the time when she expected Gunvor home from her usual evening walk over the island.

Gunvor greatly disliked roses and lavender in this form, but, as it was the only way in which Aunt Vikka thought she was able to give her pleasure, she could not be so unkind as not to appear pleased.

And Gunvor was incredibly thoughtful, for she nearly always came at the right moment when Aunt Vikka was sitting down again with complacency, while rose leaves and lavender buds filled every corner of the room with their mild, musty fragrance and a phantom army of remembrances.

And this time she came very punctually.

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“Oh, Faster Vikka, how nice you have made it smell here! The weather is very rough to-night,” she added.

There was something of the moisture and freshness of the weather outside in her voice, and, as she put her cheek to her mother's, Fru Elin's deep eyes began to glow. She smiled quietly, but said nothing.

This is her youngest one, her dearest—the one in all the world who has brought joy into her life.

Gunvor's engagement to Svein Torgersen is the only thing, however, that she cannot agree with.

Fru Elin suspects all men; she thinks that they cannot be trusted in anything. And those who know what she has passed through consider that she has reason. She does not like Gunvor's wanting to marry; she had resolved that no woman of the Haero family hereafter should marry.

Gunvor does not try to make her change her mind. To move a mountain would be as easy. But she is her mother's daughter and has a will of her own, and her mother respects it. She has promised one thing—to consider well before she marries.

And her mother has become less anxious; she knows she can depend on Gunvor's

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promise. She tries to get used to the thought that what she most dreads may happen. But she never asks after Torgersen. To-night a letter has come; she knows that, but she does not ask. Yet she was not indifferent to the way he won the people's hearts during the short time he was here. She went so far in her admission as to think, "Possibly there is something in him," but to Gunvor she did not say a word.

However, had she been able to smuggle a few months more into the almanack, she would have done it; for, with unpleasant obstinacy, he had suggested that the marriage should take place next midsummer.

No doubt it would be so! When he was ready in the spring, and came and settled down as a qualified medical man at Haero itself (a wing of the house was to be put in order for him), then probably Gunvor would marry him without delay—she knew young people; she had seen such things before—but, in any case, it would not be she who sent for the carpenter to put the wing in order.

Gunvor, who had walked to and fro a few times, stopped in front of her, smiling.

"Mother, what were you thinking of?"

"Yes, what?" said the mother slowly, and rose up.

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They stood a moment, looking into each other's eyes. Gunvor was the same height as her mother and had the same fine figure, but with youth's softer lines, the same strong jaw and firmly-moulded face, the same large deep-set eyes; but though there was mildness in the look, there was fire in the depths within. It seemed as if they were measuring each other—then they sat down again in silence.

Gunvor once more looked towards her mother.

"There is no need for us to hurry with the wing. He has been offered the chance of going to Italy with a friend who is ill, and he has got his examination put off," she said. Then she went on: "He asks me what he shall do. I think it may do him good, and I have told him to go. So I have sent him that £50, you know. He had some debts, and needed an outfit. He wanted to borrow money down there, but I did not wish it. I did right, didn't I?"

Fru Elin's face had a strained expression, a strange smile, which Gunvor could not understand.

In answer to the inquiring look she nodded, rose, stroked her hair, and smiled again.

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It would be a long time before that midsummer came!

Gunvor went early to her room that evening; she was tired, but she sat down beside the fire and gazed into it. It was strange to watch the peat embers; it seemed as if they could not die!

How much good it would do him to go out into the world; he would get over all that was left of . . . what people called his faults . . . it would be a great thing to get rid of those entirely. For the rest, he *was* much better the last time he was here. His manner was more polished—that could not be denied! It was as if all the best in him had risen to the surface, and a new element had come into his life. And he had said himself that it was so, and that it was she, only she, who could make something better of him. She had felt its responsibility. Did his well-being depend on her? Perhaps it was true that people could not do without each other, that they might be lost if no love protected them. She rose suddenly and went to the window. Her thoughts pursued her still—recollections of her first youth, remembrances of Doctor Juell. He was one of those men who are strong in the fight as long as warm words follow them. His

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weapons were good, but when he felt the chill of great loneliness they fell out of his hand. That he had not reached his aim in life, that his ideals were shattered, Gunvor would never forget. The almost remorseful memory of this haunted her for a year after his death.

“Be my Valkyrie!” he had asked her, as if in jest. She knew he had been in earnest, and that she in her young pride and short-sighted honesty had not been able to help him break off a connection that ruined him. This had lain as a burden on her first youth. There was something of the same anguish now in her feeling for Torgersen. It seemed to her as if the responsibility of fostering the higher instincts in him lay with her.

She looked out. The fog came nearer. She followed it with her eyes. It slid with a gleam through the darkness; hushed as a mother, it wandered across sea and land and folded itself over all.

Still she stood there. The waves were lulled to rest, the roar of the sea grew fainter. She was listening. She always imagined she could hear bells in a dense fog.

She looked down into the garden. There

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every bare little bush was softly and warmly wrapped in the clinging white mist. A soft motherliness awoke in her. Do good to all men; and enfold *one* so closely in love as to save his life!

She sat down again before the fire. It was strange to watch the peat embers; they would not die, but turned alternately into dim points of light and blood-red sparks—and her mind swayed in like manner.

Many roads lay before her; lands that she did not know confronted her. Surely in the distance she could hear a lyre with a thousand strings. As its music floated nearer, dissolving into varied harmonies, the mother feeling left her and the young blood of her race awoke, and love struck the chord. She had promised to become his wife next midsummer. If that was so imprudent as her mother said, how was she to know it? She had made up her mind! And she felt as if the summer had come next morning when she awoke.

Aunt Vikka's rose had budded—and that must be a true sign!

Were not his eyes like a child's, and had she not seen deep into his soul? His mind was not very highly cultured, that was true—a large fertile waste filled with earthly

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love; but open honesty was there, and finer forces latent seemed to beg for outlet.

She felt again the wonderful power of that evening, as if the holy fire of her promise had blazed up into fulfilment—as if they were no more parted, but belonging to each other wholly. When he came home, they joked together over the fact that he always felt he had her with him. How strange it was, though! For it was his own wish that nothing should happen this midsummer.

Night was coming on. The winds woke up and began to steal about the old house, whining in the long desolate corridors, where those of the Haero family who could not get peace in their graves were wont to patter.

As Gunvor sat there she distinctly heard the grey-haired old man, who never came except when something happened in the family that did not please him; and she heard Thor Tvarsson, and after him Fru Sigrid, who wanted to know where Thor was going to-night. The stairs up to the attic creaked! She stole forward and listened for the sound of his sabre, for since his death the misfortune of having to wear arms followed him. It could be heard clearly, but Gunvor was more interested in the peat embers.



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They glowed so faithfully ; they would not die.

Next morning at six Gunvor was down in the salting-house, where the work was already going on. A parcel of cod had arrived, which had been already profitably sold to a yacht from Bergen waiting for it outside the harbour. The work progressed rapidly, and not for the sole reason that the workers knew an eye was following them. It was said of Gunvor that she made capable people of those she took into her service. All were disappointed if she did not come according to her custom. A few pleasant words and a bright smile, or a short, severe reprimand, when that was necessary ; this they had grown to expect daily. They were proud of her, not only the Haero people, but those from other places in the neighbourhood as well. They thought that she was in a different position from anybody else up there, and that it was only right to have respect for her.

“ When women are of the right sort no one will harm them,” Anders Halskar would say, and he would turn his quid of tobacco and spit far out between his teeth with an expression that said this was a very rare occurrence.

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Anders Halskar was an authority both in the salting-house and on the bridges, and, besides that, he was captain of Gunvor's boat when she was not in command herself. But he was never called anything else except Anders Halskar from the time when he was in Doctor Juell's boat. There he had such a terrible night once that he had not been able to go to sea for a long time after. So Gunvor Thorsdatter had sent for him, and now he was here and was allowed to do what he liked. It was he who managed all the boats.

To-day he had hurried to get ready the new boat with six pairs of oars. It was the birthday of the rector of the parish, so, of course, all the Haero people were going to his house.

When evening came it was fine and starlight, and Anders stood by the boat in the English finery he had bought in Hull thirty years ago.

But it did not please him when only Fru Elin and Aunt Vikka came down, and Gunvor stood on the bank saying that she would come afterwards; Anders was not to come back to fetch her; she meant to walk along the shore.

Anders unfastened the rope and swore

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between his teeth. He did not like to see her running along the coast like a bird.

Gunvor looked after them with a smile on her serious mouth. She could not stand the old-fashioned custom of going to a party at coffee, and then sitting all the evening and far into the night talking and eating copiously. But here no one thought there was anything to be objected to in that; even her sensible mother held that a custom which had been carried on for hundreds of years ought to be kept up. So it was very lucky for Gunvor that there were people she had to attend to.

She went in, pleased to think that afterwards there was the post to occupy her.

Lights were shining in all the windows of the Rectory. In the passages and on the stairs the servants were running against each other, for the rector could never wait, and he always found something to be done upstairs when they had more than enough to do downstairs. They could not be everywhere. Nobody could do that but the rector's wife, and she was used to it. She must, of course, be in the kitchen, otherwise she could not be sure that nothing was burnt, and in the pantry where the dessert was to be got ready as well as the cold dishes; then there was coffee, with

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cakes and bread and butter to be prepared for all that came, and punch and other drinks that had to be ready to the minute, for Egidius never would wait. And every guest had to be received and placed according to rank and importance—both in this world and the next. Egidius was very particular about that—he who knew so well what people were worth and how often they went to the Lord's Table—so it was necessary not to make any blunders there either.

The others grew red with their exertions, both those in the kitchen and those who were waiting upon the guests—but not the rector's wife. Pale, almost blanched in the face, she glided up and down the stairs, to and fro the passages. There was some cold perspiration on her forehead and her smile was perhaps a little nervous, but otherwise there was nothing noticeable in her appearance. She was so used to it.

While she was down in the pantry looking after the trays of coffee, she listened anxiously every time somebody crossed the floor above her. She could not understand why anybody but she should move about. When the rector sometimes paced the floor up and down the sitting-room it annoyed her. She thought that while she did her duty, Egidius might

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as well keep still. It was insupportable, just as if she had neglected something! But she knew well that she had a conscientious feeling of duty. In her youth she had been kept sitting at the bedside of her sick aunt, but when she married the Reverend Egidius Thymann out of pure gratitude, she had resolved that he should never want anything, and so she was constantly running to him with something or other all day long. This habit grew more and more, for Egidius would not offend her by refusing the small services their daily intercourse gave rise to.

No one can say that she was not happy in her perambulatory marriage; she had never expected anything else.

She wore an expression born of this walking existence—a sort of fanatical rapture of delight in her toil, blended with something that reminded one of a beast with a heavy burden on his back. It seemed as if it agreed with her, she was so tough; but she had never put on any flesh. However, she never looked so thin as when she was dressed, as now, in her best clothes—an old black silk dress with a white front.

Upstairs, the rector with solemn steps walked about among the guests, who were in the dining-room and the adjoining rooms.

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When he was talking eagerly, as on this occasion, there was a funny contrast between his stout body and the little affected voice that cracked and squeaked continually.

He was a big, well-fed man, wearing a new black suit and a broad smile that spread from ear to ear. He was always in the best of humours at these times. His eyes were smaller than ever from sheer delight at his own amiability and that of all these dear people, who had come together to testify to their appreciation of his excellent qualities. He went about speaking to everybody with angelic sweetness. They could scarcely believe that it was so difficult to come to him on a Monday, and least of all did he himself suspect this. He had no idea that he ever was unpleasant, even on a Monday. In his soul there was a wonderful ideal of the perfect man, and it seemed to him the most natural thing in the world that he himself should embody it.

This afternoon he walked about talking, but when he had finished talking he went away; he did not want to hear what others had to say. On this occasion he took at one plunge his total amount of social intercourse. He found it difficult to realise that there were other opinions than his own, and the people

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he valued most were those who knew how to listen.

There always was a very mixed assemblage at the rectory. It was the only place in the parish where the different social circles met.

Thither came both the old inhabitants of Nordland and those who had immigrated—officials and private persons. There were in this North-country place two different races living side by side ; time had failed to blend them together. One race was at home here ; the other was living, as it were, in a strange house and not knowing how many rooms were in it. In the smaller rooms of the rectory the men were gathered ; they were standing in groups by the doors, or were walking up and down. They were talking of herring and mackerel, of the price of cod-liver oil, and of the cod that were now coming in among the rocks at Utskjaer, but that were caught in so few numbers. Others were talking politics ; they would teach the Storting how to behave, and instruct the Ministers how to settle the Transvaal question.

In the big sitting-room among the women there was as yet no clamour of tongues. It was too early in the evening. They were sitting round the walls and the small tables cautiously looking about them. By degrees they began to congregate in little groups. The

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Nordland people suddenly waxed talkative and hearty. Their sing-song accent reminded one of the people of Capri as their conversation grew animated. They bent together in intimate talk, discussing what had happened since they last met.

The young ladies chattered like sea-birds. There is Ghita Thulesius, daughter of the merchant at Lunnõ. She is tall and slender, with a perpetual restlessness in her long, swan-like neck and small, clear eyes.

“What was it you said about my dress? Oh, you said ‘yes,’ but not at once; if you really thought it lovely, you wouldn’t hesitate before saying so. How hot it is here!”

They all agreed that it was hot, and then they talked on about the white silk dress of the wife of an equerry of the Court who was there. They discussed whether Sarah Listow’s opinion had really been a candid one. There is the same intensity in their interest as in the northern summer day. Their young unsophisticated minds find charm in the unwonted scene. They are impressed by the many lights, which, however, only dimly illumine the large room. They enjoy their coffee; it is always a favourite drink, and then here at the rectory there are so many nice things with it. They know that they will be allowed to



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dance afterwards, but they do not say anything about it, as this is considered to be a secret. When they are going to dance at the rectory, the fact is always confided to them separately by the rector out in the passage.

But neither Ghita nor Sarah can be quiet. The swan-like neck is always turning from side to side, and Sarah's eyes are such that her friends think she is on the point of moving, though she says she has a perfectly comfortable seat. Selma Lind looks very sweet in her pink dress; she is stately as a young seagull, with a restless softness in her black eyes and a clear, pale complexion. She is looking about her. She wants to see the new judge when he comes. The most remarkable thing about him is that he is unmarried and has a clerk who has just come from Christiania. Among the matrons is the wife of the sheriff's officer, swaying to and fro in her seat. She is called the "Cat Lady," for she is so devoted to cats as to make herself rather eccentric. She has a habit of looking reproachfully at people, and saying, "How difficult it is to please everybody." Two of her sisters are sitting beside her. The lines of their profiles remind one of the outlines of rocks and promontories on the coast; however, there is in them something that calls to mind the young birds on

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the coast—something open, interested, naturally attractive. They keep close together as they move, like auks sitting on the rocks towards evening.

Fru Hoan is looking round. When she moves about she gives the impression of a ship in full sail. She is dressed in black silk with a white front. She is not very talkative, but her whole face proclaims that she is enjoying herself. She cannot help confiding to her sister Tonette that things are very different now that the places of honour are filled by such matronly and amiable ladies. Tonette does not hear. She has paid a visit to Trondhjem, and now everybody is asking her questions at once so that she is bewildered. She shakes her head and laughs with a voice as pleasantly fresh as the cry of the chough.

“Oh, everything was so nice and comfortable there. I found it the same wherever I went—to the church or to the theatre—I enjoyed one as much as the other! But pardon, I’m just closing my eyes; I always do when I’m sitting still!”

Near by some ladies are talking about the white silk dress of the equerry’s widow, which has made quite a sensation. But they compose themselves, and begin again with domestic economy. If you only really

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understand how to manage, you never need be without meat in the house, they maintained. And there was the sheriff's old housekeeper that had come on a visit, and was such a sensitive person that she could talk of nothing without melting into tears. They remarked that she had been so very easy to get on with—one of those who never hurt anyone's feelings—but now, since she had taken to religion, one could not be sure.

Then coffee was served again. They looked at it questioninglly. "What do you think? Is it nice and hot still?"

Though it might seem as if they were entirely lacking in manners, they felt they must take ever such a little drop more, for they knew that to-day the coffee was not made from a few of the ordinary beans, but was of a kind strong enough to make them perspire. On the opposite side were sitting some ladies of the merchant class, and some others who had come up from the towns in the South. It was the ambition of the merchants' wives to buy their dresses from Printemps. The white silk dress of the equerry's widow had agitated the minds of these ladies. Especially agitated was Fru Hammer. She did not wish to criticise, but when one is forty-five years old and has a

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grown-up daughter, ought one to wear white silk ?

This question was thoroughly discussed. The matter was an important one.

Fru Hammer insisted that the equerry's widow ought soon to begin to "dicorticate." Most of the others agreed with her, though they did not quite know what she meant.

It was an expression she had borrowed from her husband, who was constantly using it. No one could very well disapprove of it, especially as the Hammers before long would be among the foremost people. That the lady could talk on any subject—of Cupid and "Pysick," or of emancipated women—strengthened her reputation.

When she said she was a "pysologist," people believed her as they would the Bible. It did not matter that they did not know she meant "psychologist." Fru Hammer's good opinion was not easily gained. She found most people too common for her taste. She has just remarked about the new doctor's family that she found they were of low social extraction, and the other ladies had been glad to be enlightened on the subject.

A little distance away is sitting Fru Thue. She cannot bear talking about dress. She was once a dressmaker, but now her husband

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is in a rather good position, and she says "in fact" with the firm belief that she says something that sounds well. Besides, she is able to boast that she belongs to an artistic family.

"How gifted you are, all of you!" says Fru Jensen.

"Yes, there is a good deal of talent in my family, but John is the greatest genius, you know. His painting is wonderful! In his pictures the tears and grapes and raindrops are so beautifully done that you feel as if you must go and touch them! And what they say about his wife is not true, for she is a lady, and people have no right to say such things of her!" As she speaks she looks at Froken Antonisen, but the latter has heard nothing. She is angry that the daughter of a poorer neighbour calls herself "Froken."

At the furthest end of the room, where the easy-chairs and the new sofa are, "The Upper Ten" (as the equerry's widow calls her circle) are sitting.

They are all from the South except Fru Elin and Aunt Vikka; the latter placidly allows herself to be examined by a newly arrived solicitor's wife. Fru Elin is knitting; every now and then she lets her clear, searching eye rove about, and there is not

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one of the ladies who likes to find it fixed on herself. Though they will not admit it, there is something in that gaze which makes them feel small. Both the equerry's widow and the curate's wife try to keep up a conversation with her; but the former does not dare to speak to her of the things that interest her most—her blue blood and her visit to the Court. All the other ladies realise how interesting these subjects are, but not Fru Elin. Over her face had spread a faint smile that cut like the lash of a whip. After that the equerry's widow turned the conversation. She is by nature a *demi-mondaine*, and being a lady by birth—the widow of a captain and equerry-in-waiting—she considers herself to be a woman of the highest rank in the country. She has been a widow for many years, but she still wears a sorrowful expression, as she finds it is becoming to her, and she is sentimental, because she finds that it also becomes her. There is a slowness, a certain languor, in her movements. Her voice is pleasant; she pronounces her words in her own particular drawl; in her white silk dress and with her hair *à l'enfant* she looks very well, and she is not without admirers.

She glances towards the door. She is thinking of the new judge. Living here

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will be less of a bore now, surely, she opines. She has mourned for her husband long enough. A change would do her good. Here occurred to her mind something that Gunvor of Haero had once said to her. She could not bear Gunvor, with her passion for forcing people to work and her influence among workers. She resented being told by that young person that women were often unable to live without the help and advice of a man, and that, if they had no husband or clergyman to confide in, it was perhaps their doctors who made their opinions as well as their pills.

Gunvor Thorsdatter had so deeply offended her on that occasion that it was a relief to find she was not present now. Such things ought not to be said, true though they were. One could never be sure of one's opinions, of course, if one had not got them from reliable sources.

She had an innate desire to give a higher impulse to the conversation, and had just been turning over in her mind some good subjects.

It was the curate's wife who could follow her best. That lady had plenty of nice little answers on hand; in varying forms and different tones they could be used on all occasions.

So the two ladies moved easily among the

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questions of the day, from spiritualism to political economy and the labour question.

The curate's wife grew a little confused; she was not used to so many mental gymnastics. But the labour question, she said, did not appear to her so difficult as people imagined. Her domestic life was an entire contrast to the perambulatory existence of the rector's wife. She belonged to the soft race of married women, who are not ashamed of keeping to the old tradition of making the men look after their wants. After her marriage, Fru Jeannette would not soil her small, white hands with doing any work. Now Theodor must do everything. She had been one of those attractive young girls who seem never to grow up into women, a quality that seems irresistible even to the most intelligent men. It was said that Theodor had been overjoyed at his good fortune. And she preserved herself in a wonderful way; she still retained the wide-eyed, innocent look, and the bloom of a child; and this Theodor perhaps took for the delicacy of ripe womanhood. She was so charmingly cocksure; and not without reason, for she was an adept in womanly arts, with no room in her small head for aught but superficialities. So she could enjoy her good time in undisturbed



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peace. She was not without intelligence, but it was of such a kind as to pander to the satisfaction of the senses. She was said to have kept Theodor well in hand, though he maintained that when choosing a wife a man should always fix on one who would obey him.

Fru Jeannette agreed that one must read to keep oneself *à jour*. She liked to read in the papers about the death of friends and acquaintances. She liked to feel that cold shudder pass down her back when she dropped the paper, crying, "No, it can't be true that he, too, is gone!" And accidents she loved; it was pleasant to lie on the couch and read about shipwrecks and great fires involving loss of life.

She felt a weird, delicious shiver down her back. Or she could be a woman of sentiment too, though rather easily *in's Blaue*—it is not certain whether anybody (even Theodor) reaped any benefit from that. The equerry's widow was already starting a new subject; she wanted to know what Fru Elin thought of the women's cause and such questions.

Fru Elin had just come back after talking to some of those whom "The Upper Ten" could not recognise. She turned slowly and looked at her questioner in a way the

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latter particularly disliked. But the widow waited for no answer. She was eager to give her own opinion, and did so to the other ladies, and then, turning to the rector, remarked that she agreed with him that it was possible for ladies to be disagreeably clever. How much unrest there was in the world! One at least had peace in one's own house now. But was there to be an end to this peace before long? She knew the rector had such a clear view of it all. Fru Jeannette looked round for Theodor. She did not know what he thought of such questions. Why should they discuss things of this sort? They, who lived outside, were enjoying themselves and these difficulties! Theodor was standing in a doorway, gazing in front of him. It was impossible to decide whether he was enjoying himself or not. He was dark, with fire in his look and a varying expression on his lips, sometimes severe, sometimes childish. His whole appearance suggested a certain ascetic fervour, and over his young, clear-cut features there hovered an expression of spiritual dignity. He gave the idea of a man forcibly repressing something within him. He was a generous, thoughtful man, with high ideals, living in a cramped atmosphere, and his life was a struggle; his path

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led through the stony places of the earth. It seems almost impossible that Fru Jeannette can be his wife. Perhaps he is not altogether discontented with his lot; at least, he can be sure that it will never occur to his wife to doubt the superiority of his mind to hers—and that is something to be thankful for in these days!

He is standing in the narrow doorway, and he does not notice that he is being jostled by Doctor Elieson, who never does anything else when he is at a party but keep an eye on his wife to see whom she is talking with. People say it is only cold curiosity to discover what in the world people can talk to his wife about.

She is carrying on a lively conversation with Froken Mo; but no one can find out what pretty Fru Elieson is driving at, not even Froken Mo. "You know what men are at heart—most of them!"—that is an expression Fru Elieson often uses. It is adapted for all occasions, and seems to suggest a deep knowledge of life, to judge from the significant, appealing expression that accompanies it.

Aunt Vikka is still being interrogated by Fru Dahn. Aunt Vikka is always questioned about so many things. Besides, Fru

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Dahn's conversation is always of an interrogatory nature. There is a buzz of questions in the air.

Aunt Vikka smiles good-naturedly. Her gentle, expressionless eyes hide much. Kept under control by her great patience, the suffering of her past life is stored up, hidden within them; she has not allowed it to make her bitter against other people.

She turns kindly towards Fru Dahn: "Yes, it is true; she is beyond everything when she goes into a shop. . . . It is quite true. . . ." And the good old creature blushes when she remembers how people laugh at her because she waits until others have been served.

Near them two solicitors' wives are talking in injured tones. Fru Salvesen is agitated because the terrible daughter of a neighbour of hers has come home in a cloak just like her own.

"You will see, Fru Schwane, it will come to this—real ladies will have to dress plainly!"

"What a pass things have come to!"

"Let us try to forget it," says Fru Schwane coaxingly; "now you shall hear about the Iversens."

And with her voice filled like a wet sponge at the recollection of what a delightful evening

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they had spent at the Iversens', she began her report: "Meat rissoles with celery, it was from Hamburg too——"

*At last* the new judge arrived, and, what was more, he was in a good humour. You could hear that in his voice. He had several kinds of voices. One was said to be very angry, that was the office one; another was said to be unusually sarcastic; but to-night a different one was heard, a remarkably pleasant one. A dispute was going on between the equerry's widow and a lady visitor, who exasperated all the ladies, for they could not find out whether she was married or not. The widow had now roused herself to eloquence. She wanted to know why a married lady should not bear her husband's name. It did not matter that it was not done in old times; it *ought* to have been done. It seemed to her at this moment as if God had commanded it on Mount Sinai. She, who with her great wealth and influence had completely subjugated her husband, now could not but think that it was a beautiful mark of submission to bear his name. Here the judge put in a word.

"But, Madame! Change her name, do you say? If it has to mark something that begins with 'sub,' then it must signify that

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you have subdued a new country. Change her name? Yes, in the same way as the Prince of Monaco would change his name if he became Emperor of Brazil. It simply signifies an enlarged sphere of influence. You women, when you change your names, enter into a new kingdom." With this the judge threw himself into the fight. The widow was rather disconcerted, for it was now demanded of her to contradict him. He was just what she expected; his manners were so charming; she felt sure he was one who should join her in forming a new and more exclusive circle up here. They were, of course, by nature friends and allies.

Neither were the other ladies insensible to the charm the judge exercised. There was something distinguished in his appearance and manner—in the tired eyes, which rather avoided the light, in the strangely cold look in those eyes, and in the well-formed mouth, when he smiled. They could not help admiring him; he drew them with a sort of mesmeric influence.

The men laughed at this infatuation; they said when a man looked like this, it did not matter that he was always thirsty.

The judge's clerk, Herr Balle, was absorbing the attention of the young ladies. He had

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such a romantic look, and was so slender, like the young men in Christiania; but how would he manage a boat?

Selma Lind was sure she could—if she wished—no, she did not wish, she did not dare. He overawed them. As he stood there now, gazing into empty space with a terrible look in his large eyes, he suggested to their minds the notorious Robespierre when he made the guillotine. They could not know that Balle was the most placid person in the world, and was only wondering whether the food would soon be served.

Afterwards, when he came up to them and was introduced, they could not utter a word, but only looked at one another blankly. To be sure, he was thin and not of an imposing size, but he used words fit to raise the roof. It was only a question of dancing—his conversation was like a volcanic eruption—and Selma Lind was powerless with joy at the thought of a fanatical waltz and a terribly wild galop with him.

Later, it was agreed he was either “nearly dying” or “very much in love,” so he was very interesting.

Shortly before they sat down to table, Gunvor arrived. “At last!” cried the young girls; but when she came up to them with

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her genial, expressive nod, they courtesied. They did not know why they had such veneration for her, for she was not so much older than they.

Fru Hammer's group, on the contrary, did not pay so much attention to her short but pleasant greeting. As usual she must, of course, go straight to the seamen's wives and daughters. And, of course, she sat down with Petrine Lyen, who used to sit alone and talk to herself at public entertainments.

But the pale face of the lighthouse-keeper's wife grew radiant when she saw Gunvor—the only person in the world who understood her.

“Well, Fru Lyen, how are you, and how are you getting on?”

Fru Lyen just looked at her without saying anything. Her eyes looked tired and had dark shadows round them.

“Oh,” she said at last, and looked round to see if there were anybody who could hear and laugh at her; “oh, fairly well! In the old days, when I was young, I was more turned to the Lord. Then I was more earnest and thoughtful, and the sea spoke to me. Now that is over—life is so hard!”

Tears filled her eyes, and she murmured in her usual way, “Surely I might have been



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spared, O Lord! I might have been taken home. I have been waiting all my life!"

Before she came here she had lived at home on her father's lighthouse, and there none of her hopes were realised. Now she was sitting here with odd girlish manners and her poor wits leading her back to the past.

People laughed when they heard that Fru Lyen had borrowed a riding horse from the Vinds and ridden about among the sand-hills in the dark, or when they saw her sitting in a boat down on the shore humming and swaying her old body to and fro. But Gunvor never laughed at Petrine Lyen. Sometimes, on clear summer days, she took her out to look for sea-birds' eggs. Then Petrine Lyen used to think she was allowed to breathe in some of that sweetness of life which she had missed.

The evening was advanced when the hostess took her place among the guests, but then there had been a sumptuous repast, and all were agreed that everything had been most enjoyable. After they had risen from table, old Skipper Tobiassen could not refrain from a burst of gratitude. When he saw her coming he lifted his glass, saying, "Many thanks, kind lady!" Then followed a stream of appreciative remarks. But now she was

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sitting still, ready to sink down from fatigue, and could scarcely hear what was said to her.

They cleared several of the rooms. The young people danced. Balle had made the judge play a wild waltz.

Gunvor sat down in a corner. One of the ladies came and wanted her to join the select circle at their table. But she shook her head and smiled: "Dear, the rector is with you! Make haste, or you will miss him."

She leaned forward a little so that she could hear what he was saying. His voice sounded very pastoral and a little instructive.

"My dear young lady, we view women's faults so severely because we are accustomed to look up to them, for they have a great function to perform for the community, and this strengthens their claim——"

She had heard enough of that. She rose and passed on.

They had stopped dancing, but the judge was still playing. What strange music this was—full of scorn and discordant laughter, diabolic in its weirdness.

She sat down rather wearily—glad that no one noticed her. Suddenly she turned round, surprised. Was it the same man who was playing? This music told of abandonment, of

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joy welling forth from hidden depths. What did it mean?

It touched her to the quick; it seemed almost as if she ought not to have heard it. She went up to the piano without knowing what she did, and, with something like aversion in her voice, she asked: "How can you play such things?"

He looked up at her absently. "It was a mistake—mere forgetfulness." He rose and bowed, smiling. "Excuse me, I didn't know that anybody was listening."

She started. Could any one say what there was in this voice, with its subtle sweetness, its depth of tone? It roused each time the same indescribable sense of pain in her. It seemed to come from another person than he who was standing there with a scornful smile on his fine mouth.

She unconsciously closed her eyes, simply to hear its wonderful cadences. There was something heavy in the ring of the tone passages in every sentence, as if another nature spoke through them—a throb of pain that lay quivering in the music of the deep voice. She looked up at him. His eyes, as they now answered her glance, sharply intelligent in their glittering brown lustre, were in harmony with the voice.

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A wave of talk passed through the rooms. Above everything else Tobiassen's angry voice was heard denouncing the ignorant people who could make a mistake between ordinary and deep-water cod.

The judge broke off just as he had begun saying something. "I thought of making a joke, but you are not listening at all. Look at the ladies hovering round the rector—a fine example of womanly susceptibility! Has the noble lady of Haero no commands for me?"

"No," she said, smiling.

"And you say nothing! You have scarcely uttered a word the whole evening. Do you belong to the order of the *incapsulated*? It is said to be a sub-order of the mussels, but it may be found even among people, perhaps—nothing is impossible with God!"

She smiled again: "No, not here in the North!"

"For that reason," he remarked, "I also expect a visit of Fortune to these parts. It is dark here, and she is blind, or she would certainly not do me the honour. Somebody is playing dance music. Balle is dreaming over 'Donauwellen.' Shall we waltz with them a single minute before the sun rises?"

"Oh no," she said shortly. Then placidly

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extended her hand: "Good night; my mother is expecting me."

"Is it true that you are a fully qualified captain of a boat? Fru Lyen is in ecstasies because she is going to sail home with you to-night——"

But she had already begun to go round saying good-bye. He looked after her.

She ought always to wear that dark red dress! It fell in such simple folds, and its very simplicity served to reveal how beautifully she was made; the deep red colour, too, gave warmth to her cold words, and harmonised with the varying expressions that passed over her face when she was silent.

He thought her a sight for gods and men when she came up to the circle, standing like a princess reviewing her court. She was outside their sphere of conception. It was on that account they could not leave her in peace; they had already confided to him that they considered her heartless and without higher interests. Earlier in the evening, when she was sitting among them, it had amused him to see how the calm pride in her nature had other forms of expression than the lackey manners of these fashionable, commonplace people. It was as if she formed

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for others a new, irresistible, uncompromising Napoleonic code !

He accompanied them down to the bridge ; he thought he might do that, though he generally did not like to see ladies sitting at the helm and managing the sails.

There was Tobiassen hurrying off those who wanted to go round Uthammaren. It would not be easy to get clear of that in half-an-hour. It was growing darker, and it would be a bad night on the sea.

“Good night !” Gunvor’s voice was heard when the boat was loosed. “What do you say, mother ? They, too, must pass Uthammaren.”

“Let us get past it before the storm comes,” said Fru Elin calmly.

And the boat glided off and disappeared behind the islet. Far out could be heard the strange, dull sound of an on-coming storm.

Then the rector sent word that the judge must come in again. They were going to taste a new kind of cognac, and the judge was a connoisseur. The boat, with six pairs of oars, was already drawn up into the boat-house at Haero, before the long storm-waves found their way into the fjord, and, roaring, lashed themselves against the shore.

Gunvor went to her room when she had

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looked after the boats herself. She stood listening a while, for, through the wild roar of the waves and the rattle of the pebbles, she could hear distinctly the words of a song she had once heard. It came to her again as she slept, and filled her soul :

“ His eye was deep :  
Myself could sink within it.”

It had been decided that Svein Torgersen should come home early in the autumn to go in for his examination at Christmas.

But instead of a message appointing the time for his home-coming, a letter arrived from Monte Carlo, saying that he could not come home till after Christmas, so he could not go in for his examination till the spring. Would she send him a few shillings, as she wished him to borrow from her ? She would get cent. per cent. for her money. Of course he travelled free, but naturally one must have money for other things.

People noticed that Gunvor grew more serious as autumn drew near.

Her mother rejoiced that midsummer was so far off, and that she had plenty of work to fill up her time. Trade was doing well ; the herring fishery was very successful ; they had swept the bottom with a seine-net far out in the fjord with excellent results, and

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in the salting-house Ezekiel was the best man for miles round. No herring obtained such a good market as that from Haero ; it could go direct to England.

“It is a good thing that you are making money,” said Fru Elin, when a letter came asking for more ; “but that does not matter when you can get cent. per cent. One could not invest one’s money better.”

Gunvor did not answer her mother.

He did not write as often as before ; several posts had come in without any message from him, but when one is travelling one has to put up with irregularities, so it was not astonishing.

However, the letter that announced his arrival in Christiania gave ground for astonishment. In it he said that it would not be possible for him to take his examination next spring. The journey had tried his health, and it was quite inconceivable how long the course was on closer inspection. Then, too, there was a special disease that it was important for him to study, and just now there were some rare cases of it at the hospitals, and such things took time. Through some influential connections he had obtained permission to put off his examination until the autumn on account of his health.



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With regard to his taking up the work of medical officer for the district up there, there was no hurry. He could get a *locum tenens* if necessary.

When Gunvor went to her room that evening she did not go to bed at once, as she had promised her mother, who thought that she looked pale. She took out of the old casket the letters that Torgersen had sent her; then she sat down to read them. Here and there she marked some passages with a pencil; afterwards she read all the marked passages. In connection with each other these pages seemed to read differently :—

“Well, here goes! Hurrah! Blessed be Munchen among cities! Paradise cannot be half as delectable. All we Norwegians should have scholarships, and come here and get rid of our sour tempers. Lorenzo insists on going into the museums. We worship beautiful angels and madonnas with a world of wonder in their eyes, and dream of heaven, and wake up in the best of humours. Oh God, what a grand religion! and how easy, isn't it?”

“To-day we went to see Böcklin's *Villa am See*. It depicts a quiet night and a woman standing looking in front of her. My

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thoughts flew to you. I am constantly thinking, for that matter, that you are standing somewhere near, looking at me. However, let me tell you about the picture. There is a sequel to it. But in that it is later in the evening, a storm is coming on, bending the poplars and ruffling the woman's veil. She is standing near the rock, altogether changed, but still the same. I can't understand why I was forced to think of you."

"We are in the Holy City. Under a sky that is calm and blue and full of harmonies, as Lorenzo says. If you only knew how he is grubbing! He falls in love with the remains of old Etruscan walls, not to speak of colossal pillars and arches; they make him crazy. And he has begun raving about the melancholy of the Campagna. He says it is undesirable. Then he ought to leave it in peace, as I do.

"Of course I, too, shall be lured to destruction among these ruins. Lorenzo will see to that. We visited the Forum to-day and (according to his statement) that renowned temple where the Vestals watched the sacred fire. With the help of his eyes I have seen the big Cortile with the long lines of honour-crowned, marble vestals around the

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white alabaster fountain, whence was drawn the water from the sky. Lorenzo is driving about all day. He is working at a long treatise on the Vesta cult as an apotheosis of *das Wiebliche an sich*. He is talking of introducing this old cult as a new imperial religion common to all nations of the world. But he thinks himself it will be a long time before it is accepted. Bearing in mind the corresponding modern conception of old maids, he understands that a slow revolution of several centuries is needed before we come to that point where the Romans once stood. Therefore one must soon begin, he says. Begin then, in God's name, say I! I have other things to do, so we don't meet very much. But when I look at these *Virgines Vestales Maximæ*, the highly honoured lady citizens among the Romans, I can't help laughing to think that it was simply the old maids that people made such a fuss of. (I must certainly tell Aunt Vikka this.) I noticed such a one to-day. She is entirely covered up, but no seam is allowed to destroy the lines of such a royal figure. It is the great Flavia Publicia. How is it that everything that impresses me is suggestive of you? . . . But still, I think they are somewhat too severe, these ladies, very Venus de Milo-like,

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very Gunvor-like—regal—as you were when I knew you first. Yes, they are too severe. They suppress the sunshine. I thrive better outside the *osterias*, where little living Roman women sing. What a heavenly country this is. A very garden of the Lord! ‘The devil may go home to Norway’ is the cry of those unhappy ones who have to return there to find no Gunvor waiting for them.”

“When one lives in Italy one must perforce change gods! It is not only Raphael who must step down from the pedestal on to which he was lifted by the imaginations of northern Europeans. I don’t know how it is, but somehow it seems as if all the furniture of one’s brain chambers, the infallible, teutonic principles . . . are here seized and carried off by the devil. For this is the land of the sun. The warmth of it is in everything—even the people’s voices. And the women! What soft, graceful movements! What dark, shining eyes, with never the shadow of a trouble in them!”

“You have been with me wherever I’ve been. You are my rigid, northerly, cold conscience—they have no such temperature here. But never have you frightened me so much

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as yesterday. I was really frightened; you were so severe at Villa Borghese.

“There we saw a statue of Isis. Lorenzo rambled on about none of her priests having dared to lift the veil from her face. And I, myself, felt that it would be death for a mortal man. ‘Come, let us go,’ I said. ‘The old gods live still; she burns me like a flame of fire.’ But Lorenzo made me keep still, and against my will I had to stand there gazing—but only from the side, for she was so terrible *en face*, so consuming in the glory of her purity, that even Juno, the queen of heaven, looked rather good-naturedly stupid beside her. Lorenzo declared that she was saying: ‘I have come to light a fire in the world.’ Of course, that was mere talk. Is there anyone else that says so? Lorenzo gesticulated wildly. I dragged him out with me. Whatever she was, she was like you. But why were you so severe? If I ever come home, you must be merciful to me. How can I help my blood being warm and wine being red? No more than I can help that in the *balnearia* of Diocletian, where the ancients cooled body and soul in great marble basins, people now sit on dry land and pray to the Holy Bernardo. Is that my fault?

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“Glory to the Madonna! But out among earthly women it is better! And now, now on the instant I must go out—for Lorenzo has come in and is talking like a Trappist absolved from his vow. I must go out among the olive trees, where dark eyes are smiling! . . .”

“Lorenzo finds that his Italian name serves him in good stead; mine nobody can pronounce, but, by Jove, I don’t fare any the worse! What does it matter to me that they tortured Giordano Bruno and burnt Galileo? I need amusement. Have we not always agreed that one must take one’s temperament into consideration? God be praised that we are in some respects rational beings. . . .”

“They may as well make Lorenzo a saint and canonise him. They always need new saints. I also am partly Roman Catholic. By the God of the highest heaven, it is a splendid religion—*una, sancta et catolica*—with churches everywhere, and madonnas that look mildly at earthly weaknesses, as our impulses (very improperly) are styled. I tell you what: when I come home it will be beautifully fitting if my earthly madonna

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gives me an *Indulgentia plenaria* for all my sins."

"I am no longer a Roman Catholic; I am a Mohammedan. You can't understand how easy it is to become Mohammedan in Paris. And why not a good Moslem? It is one god one worships—a great oriental pope, with ninety-nine names, who exacts order and the utmost subjection, and who is very practical. There is only one thing, that is sin in itself; *that's* the splendid part of it; one is spared the long list of sins; and there is to be read in the Koran; 'God is gracious, his intention is to make the fear of God easy, for man is weak.' That is well said. And one also reads there that every man bears his fate bound round his neck. Do you hear that, you mortals? Why, then, do you struggle?"

"*Ave Maria!* To me it seems enough that I have come home to Christiania, without rushing head foremost into my examination too. You see, Gunvor, I am a little exhausted by my travels, to tell the truth; it was somewhat of an exertion to be a Mohammedan, and I think when I can have it put off till autumn—why should I not accept the fortunate offer? Of course, I shall come up this summer all the same, and we

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shall be married at midsummer. That we can do very well, and then I can make a little trip next autumn, and go in for my examination. As for my appointment as medical officer for the district committee, say I: 'In the name of heaven, let them wait a little. They can get a substitute. And when I come, let it be midsummer at once. Why should we not hasten to pluck the red roses and drink the golden wine? . . .'

Once again she took all the letters, and looked at the handwriting from letter to letter. Then she nodded her head slowly, as if in affirmation to what she had always thought—that in the handwriting there was a subtle suggestion of blood.

She put out the lamp and went to bed. That night she dreamt of Doctor Juell. He was standing at the bottom of the bed; his face was full of sorrow, as when she saw him for the last time.

"Gunvor, I had high ideals; but I was bound. Why would you not set me free? Why did you allow the waters to rise up around me?"

She woke up with a cold sweat on her forehead. Next morning she gave her mother the last letter from Torgersen, and made her read



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it. Later on in the morning Fru Elin went down with it to the office. She nodded shortly.

"I should think you can see by this time," she said.

Gunvor was reading the foreign post. She looked up at her mother. "Yes," she said quietly; "but I never undo what I have done wrong."

"He will never be anything," said the mother, slowly and harshly.

Gunvor looked quickly up at her. "Don't say so, mother. I shall go by the boat to-night—I shall go down to see Svein."

"Oh, how little you think before you do anything," said Fru Elin.

"Yes, mother, now it is *my* turn, isn't it?" She looked sadly at her.

Fru Elin rose up straight and proud. "You mean that I need not worry, I who have passed through so many troubles. But they are not yet over for me. I shall have to begin them again."

Gunvor went up and put her arms round her mother. "It will be all right," she said in a low voice.

A few days afterwards Gunvor went to Christiania to see Svein and to get everything

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arranged. She had to go home again the next day.

But that morning, while she was going to and fro between his rooms and the hospital and the university without finding him, Svein Torgersen, as usual, was at the Grand Hotel, sitting with his new friends, and with whisky and water in front of him. He had no idea who had entered the room at this moment. But when everybody's eyes suddenly turned to the door, his followed rather apathetic and indifferent, for he was feeling dull after yesterday. A tall veiled lady came in, stepped forward a little into the room, and then stood looking round. Torgersen took hold of his glass again.

"Goodness! How you gape, you fellows! Your health, Krafft! I wish you wouldn't snuffle so, Syversen!"

Syversen lifted his somewhat watery eyes, but was too indolent to answer, and only shrugged his shoulders, as he always did when spoken to. Krafft evidently was less fuddled.

"The deuce, how well-made she is!" he muttered.

He had turned round and was following with his eyes the strange lady, who had taken a few steps farther forwards, put back her

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veil, and was looking round with such an odd expression that the men all began to wake up. At first they thought it strange, then funny.

"I swear she is taking the measure of us," said Krafft. "Good heavens, how royally straight she is! I have thought of painting Herod's queen, proud Mariamne. If I could get this woman for a model—it would be deuced——"

"Shut up," said Torgersen, suddenly rising, "and be off, both of you."

Then she walked up to him. It was Gunvor. "How do you do, Svein?" she said quietly. "Your landlady directed me here in the end." She was still standing, looking round, thoughtfully surprised. "It's a good thing I've found you, for I haven't much time——"

Torgersen pressed her hand. "Nonsense," he said gaily; "come, sit down here. They are gone, all of them. Come now, let us sit down. You can't imagine how funny it is to see you down here. You bring the salt freshness of the sea with you, and—really, you can't think what a sensation you are making here. You wake up all the attendants; look! how they are staring!"

His face shone with delight, and his honest

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blue eyes looked into hers with such undoubted joy that she felt relieved.

"You *shall* sit down," he said. "Never mind that wretched whisky; let us take another table! Coffee!" He beckoned to a waiter. "Coffee and something in it. Wouldn't that be nice after—? Come, listen, Gunvor!" His eyes, hands, all the man, asked forgiveness. "If I had only known about your coming, you may be sure I should not have been in that company, such bad company as it is; yes, when I see you, Gunvor, I feel how bad it is!"

She looked round.

"Now everything has a different air; the atmosphere seems so pure. Yes, truly, it is as if you had brought with you something of the sea that has washed this place clean." And he went on talking. He had become quite wide-awake and lively. "But, dear, must you go already?"

Gunvor had risen. She did not seem to like the atmosphere. "Is it here you study that disease you spoke of?" she questioned.

Torgersen began to laugh. "Dear, don't be so severe. Fancy! when I saw you first, I thought it was the lady of Villa. am See that appeared to me. But now you are almost Isis! Be rather a madonna!

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She takes everything so sensibly. Dear, sit down here, this is such a comfortable place, and it will do you good to see this fine café and a little café life."

"Thanks, I have seen it!" Gunvor buttoned her gloves.

"Have you seen it?" said Torgersen, laughing. "That was quickly done, I think!"

Gunvor looked round the room. "Yes, I have seen it," she said somewhat impatiently; "I have had quite enough of it!"

It was her candid opinion. Torgersen had never imagined that people from the country could be so impossible.

And they had left the coffee too.

Outside the café Gunvor became talkative. She wanted a straight answer. And Torgersen could not tell a lie; she got to know all she wanted to find out.

"I can't be really angry with you," said she; "you are too honest." She sat down and looked at him. He was changed; he was different from what she had expected. "But now that must be given up; you must take your examination in the spring. I won't have you at Haero before. I think you will have to give up Messrs. Krafft and Syversen if you don't want to give up me!"

He was standing at the farthest window,

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looking out. He could not help being a little ashamed of himself. Then he turned quickly round, and stopped in front of her. She had said it half as a joke; but there was something sorrowful, too, and something determined, fearfully determined, in the steady glance.

He threw himself down with his head on her lap. When he looked up again he had tears in his eyes. "Shame upon you to speak so cruelly," he whispered. "But now it will be something else," he whispered again.

She did not reply. She was sitting looking before her. It seemed as if she were looking past him and his life. But he felt that her hands were hot.

"Gunvor," he whispered, "if you say that you love me, then I swear by Isis and the Madonna not to put my foot into that café till I have got my degree, and not then."

A trembling took hold of her. He noticed it, and grew paler, and pressed himself near to her.

She bent over him suddenly and kissed him. "I love you," she murmured.

## CHAPTER II

### THE JUDGE AT HOME

THE day is far advanced. Out among the rocks the evening sun is shining; up the grey mountain sides steal the soft rays. A chill exhalation rises from earth and sea. Down by the shore the sheep are eating seaweed, while the curlew roams there with his long, fine beak uplifted, and the chough with his red legs. Inland, the magpies are hopping hither and thither, eating the young bulbs in the gardens; and beyond the land are flocks of sea-gulls calling to their mates with clamorous notes.

All has become life and movement. Those who have been out fishing have come home; heavily-freighted smacks make for the south or weigh anchor alongside bridges and salting-houses; and on the islets along the shore, where the fish is to be hung out, the folk are busy.

At the landing-stages they load and unload; ropes rattle; herring barrels, cod-liver oil, and big packages of fish are thrown from hand to hand, while the men shout, and the birds join in the clamour.

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The storms have abated, the breezes are light, the sea murmurs gently and with deliberation, and, close at hand, one hears the shrill voices of the birds and the whirr of their quick wings. The voice of spring is calling!

At the bottom of a small sailing boat at the Myrland Bridge, Irmild Myrland lay looking out. She appeared to be about sixteen, tall and slender, supple as a willow, and restless; she could not be still a moment. Her father, Thorkel Myrland, used to call her the sea-serpent.

The boat lifted on the incoming tide; soon it might break away, insecurely fastened as it was, and might drift anywhere—down to José, to the land of Spain, or to London, to Sir John—— She laughed. Oh no, she was to go to Haero. How delightful it was there, with long curtains and other lovely things. She turned half round and looked up to one of the small cottages that lay opposite the landing-stage. Then her mother came to the door and called out something; the voice was sharp and had a strange accent. She bent down in the boat, out of sight, muttering, “Not if I know it! You may go yourself, Sarah!” She rose again, with both her hands under her chin. Her long,



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pale face took on a mutinous, brooding expression.

Far out were ships, going to the South, to the South . . . to sail, perhaps, round the world.

Some boats were coming in from the fishing shallows outside Haero. She could see how the cod were filling the boats almost to sinking point. She saw the fishermen dragging the boats to land, and wading through the water in heavy, wet sea-boots, so tired that they could scarcely get along. Such a life! Stay here at Myrland any longer? Impossible. It was another thing when the foreign seamen had stopped here, and when the pleasure yacht sailed in, and Sir John came on shore every day and took her and her mother on board the yacht.

But now they had gone. Now there was nothing else to listen to but the dreadful sea, which was pressing itself against the shore and muttering to her weird tales of toil and storm and shipwreck. But could it tell her how she would find it at Haero? For four years the ladies of Haero had kept her at the best school here, but now they had found out that it was not good for her to be at Myrland any longer; she was to live with them, and be trained to more cultured

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ways. Oh yes, she had always thought herself too——

What miserable weather! Only gleaming ground-swells came driving in! Not a wreck was to be seen on the sea!

She smiled and shut her eyes. How different it was that time, when the storms had broken loose and forced the ships to run aground, and the strange seamen came in from the sea. Why was it that no one ever got cast ashore now?

She was only ten when the Spaniard was here; now that she was sixteen no one ever came but the wretched fishermen; now nothing ever happened except when her father, though weak and small, beat her mother, who was big and strong and handsome, but an abject creature. Shameful to let such a man lay hands on her—old brute that he was! She rose and stood staring out towards the wherries on the sky line.

She might well be furious! She was not the daughter of Thorkel Myrland—that she had heard once when she was quite small—but from what he and her mother had said at that time she understood that the wild sea was her father, and she had for a long time believed it to be so. She had seen her father rise high into the air when a storm

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was raging; far out among the rocks he would dash the foamy waves from his mighty head, till she grew frightened of him. Afterwards, when the foreign seamen laughed at her for it, he had changed into a stranger from far away, who sent her one thing after another on the long waves—every morning something was lying on the shore. There had not been anything for a long time now, so it was best to go away. . . . She rose on one arm; with a little serpentine movement she got out of the boat.

Her mother was again standing up there calling her.

She grew angry. What had she to do with Sarah? Nobody here knew anything about her. Was it certain she was her mother?

She went up the hill slowly.

At the top Mother Sarah was standing. She tore the dirty, red silk handkerchief from her head and stood waving it, while her black, glossy hair was blown round her face.

Irmild stood still half-way up the hill. "I think I shall go at once," she said.

Mother Sarah looked at her with a quick glance from her big, black eyes; then she began to cry.

"You might as well wait a bit," she sobbed;

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"I am so helpless, and you are the only one I have."

Irmild laughed. "And you won't have me much longer, poor thing, for I am just going."

Mother Sarah dried her tears with the red handkerchief and went towards her. "Come in, darling; you shall have a drop of something." She looked cautiously round. "You can't be so unkind as to go when you know how badly I am treated."

"That's come to an end now. Did you think I didn't know it? That night when Mother Gunvor herself dragged Thorkel in when his boat capsized in the fjord; then she held him by the neck outside the boat till he swore before God who is in heaven, and before all that is in the sea, never to beat Sarah again, and he has kept his oath, poor man. Never has he touched anybody since then; he is so frightened of all the terrible things in the sea. You ought to thank God for it . . ."

Sarah folded her hands and her voice became mild and coaxing. "Yes, my angel, let us pray so universally to God, that He won't allow the gentry to change you, but that you may always do your duty to your loving mother—for there are many dangers in the sea of life, and grief brings bitter pain."

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Her gentleness suddenly changed into fury. "You are a child of the evil one!" she gasped.

For Irmild ran down the hill so fast that the stones rattled under her feet. She laughed and sang :—

"Ha! ha! listen to me :  
If thy evil eye on me I see,  
The black, black sea I'll use for thee,  
Ha! ha! he! he!"

"You can come up with my red box, and the Virgin Madonna on the wall, and the angel," she called back.

When she got to the beach she waved her hand and laughed. "Didn't you get a few coffee beans from Aamunel? You can amuse yourself now by putting on the kettle, and I shan't be there to drink it for you this time!" she shouted. Then she went on again and disappeared round the corner.

She ran on laughing. How in the world could she help this woman standing there complaining! Of course, it didn't matter to her—she came from the wild, black sea, she did.

And there was something of the sea in her eyes, in their greenish, burning, restless look, something of its subtle capriciousness

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in her whole being. Now she ran, now she walked, taking long strides so heavily that it seemed an exertion to move the lightly built, sinuous limbs.

Suddenly she threw herself down on the ground and began to examine her hands eagerly. She must see what her fate would be; she had learnt fortune-telling from her mother.

She looked at the left one, a long thin hand that had never worked, with irregular fingers. That meant an eventful life. She laughed. As if she did not know that before! Look at the Mount of Jupiter . . . and there the road goes straight up to the Mountain of the Sun. . . . She shrieked for joy; and the heart line ran across the hand under the Mounts and into the Venus ring! Oh! how long it was, the line of life! How warm the sun will be and how sweet the wine, she reflected, her thoughts turning to her visit to Sir John's yacht that summer. She rose, pleased with herself and breathing thanks to Providence. It was a long time since she had rendered gratitude so heartily.

But then there was the right hand! She lifted it defiantly towards the light. It depended upon this one whether her good

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fortune would come true. This was a harder hand, with long sharp nails. It could hold its own, and it could scratch. "I hope your reverence will not mind my doing this," she muttered playfully to herself.

Then she continued: "Goodness! the line of fate, where is it going? The nuisance is that it simply disappears! What a shame! But look at the line of health and the line of life and the line of mind! There are the talents; there is great power. There are the lines of heart; they point to riches, all of them, and a sea voyage; here is one that points to wilfulness; look at that thumb! . . . Oh no, there is nothing the matter with it; my future is just what I wanted it to be, my happy future that no one knows of or even guesses at . . ." She got up and ran until she lost breath and had to sit down. Then she went on sedately. They might see her from Haero.

When she arrived there she did not look at her best. Her small eyes, black as agate, roved about shyly, her long plait of hair was ruffled and hung in a tangled mass. She looked so untidy that Fru Elin sent her up to the room that was put in order for her next to Aunt Vikka's. Aunt was going to look after her.

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"I am not sure that she is very promising," said Fru Elin deliberately, when Gunvor came down again, having been up to see her.

"She ought to have come before. I ought to have known how things were. I am always neglecting something. How can I remedy that, mother?"

"It is soon enough, if her character is all right," said Fru Elin, as she looked up from her work; "and, if it isn't, the shorter the time the better. We shall soon have a large household here," she remarked, looking out of the window.

There was a little girl out there playing with Aunt Vikka's white cat.

Gunvor smiled and stroked her mother's hair. "You are so strong, mother, you never give in; that's why we can do a good deal," she said.

She went down again to her work; but Grandmother Elin still sat looking out, with a smile on her severe lips, for the child had put reins on the cat and the two were frolicking with each other. It was a little girl four years old—Fru Elin's granddaughter. She had come over from America last week, sent as luggage addressed to Haero. Those out there who wanted to get rid of her had told her



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that she was to be sent to her real mother, and, with a feeling that everything evil now had passed, the child had fallen into Gunvor's arms and given her the name of "mother" even on the first day.

"That is well," Fru Elin had said, "for she resembles no one more than you, thank God!"

She was called Gunvor after her aunt, but in America they had made it into Little Gunn, and this was kept for the sake of distinction.

It was not only the severe grandmother that Little Gunn had won, but every one else on the place, and with all the animals she had tied bonds of friendship. The horses neighed when she showed herself at the stable door, and when they ate out of her hands they took care not to bite the small fingers. ✓ The big stable cat, called Haagen, was always jealous of Grimm on her account. Grimm was a big, half-breed Newfoundland dog, that from the first moment had shown a special devotion to Little Gunn. As if feeling his position of one at home here receiving a new-comer, he had adopted a protecting manner, and regarded it as a matter of course that he should show her about everywhere; and he liked it very much when she called him

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“Dwim”—soon everybody else called him by this name. Little Gunn was thoroughly happy in her new home. And then she loved Tonetta, who helped in the cowsheds and had to go out after the cattle in summer. She thought no one so nice as the lank-haired, cross-eyed Tonetta; all her dolls must be called Tonetta. For Tonetta would walk with her on the shore as often as she could steal away from the cowsheds. Nobody at Haero knew better than Little Gunn if it was flood or tide, for the shore had more attractions for her than anything else. She spent most of her time there, while Dwim looked on in despair, as with infinite delight she toddled about carrying an old bucket, and poked her fingers into crannies for tiny young crabs, or knocked off limpet shells from the rocks. Further, there was an old crow in the garden that was a great friend of hers too. Her name was Perle, and she had a sad history, therefore Little Gunn never thought she could do enough for her. The fact was, there had been a great number of crows on the neighbouring estate; they had grown too daring to take any notice of the scarecrows, so poison was laid for them. Only one survived it, that was Perle. But Perle had not got off scot free. She had developed a throat disease,

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so that her croak quite left her, and she was then taken throughout the neighbourhood for some strange foreign bird, for neither man nor beast could make out what sort of creature this was with its soft "rok, rok," a sound they had never heard before. So she hid herself well in among the thickest bushes, as if she were ashamed of herself, and people wondered what kind of an animal it was, until Fru Elin one day found out.

Now Little Gunn gave her her food every day in the scullery, and she seemed to thrive well with the change. She always pretended not to see that there were scare-crows on the place.

Little Gunn had also other friends at Haero. There was the white bell-ewe, and there was the buck Jens, and a cock called Abdul, and then there was Ezekiel in the salting-house, and the maids and others; and when she dreamt one night that she was in America, where no one was good to her, she fell into such a violent fit of crying that they had to wake her up.

With Irmild it was different. None of the animals cared for her. Lajla hated her because she tempted her with cream and then kicked her. Grimm felt contempt for her—he was not sure why—and Perle never dared

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to enter the kitchen passage when she was there. Neither did people like the Myrland Miss. She wanted to be so very grand, and when they saw her coming towards the house it was never a sight to please them. Boot Tobine, who cleaned the office and lived in the wing, was glad not to be living under the same roof as anything so mysterious in its origin. For there was something of the wildness of the sea in her. She had been found out among the rocks. And no one knew how old she was, or if she had been baptized, for there were no papers found with her.

Boot Tobine knew something about life at Myrland; she had done charing work there. For it always happened at Myrland that part of the year money flowed freely. Then Mother Sarah would not move a finger to do anything, but went about in red stockings and *salopp*, and was very fine. Then blank distress would follow.

So Boot Tobine did not like to see Irmild come round the corner of the house—for she was a witch, and, as it is to be read in God's Book, to be eschewed as evil. And she warned all the young men against her, urging them, as they valued their own salvation, to have no dealings with a girl of such doubtful origin.

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Irmild did not notice that Boot Tobine kept out of the way, or that the maids whispered together when they saw her making her way to the salting-house. Some good-looking youths, who had lately come to the place, attracted her first—and then she became interested in Ezekiel.

When he had thrown off his jacket and was standing at work, showing the broad chest and square shoulders of his well-knit, muscular body, and with a wonderful light in his eyes . . . then she could not take her gaze off him.

She had certainly noticed that she must put up with a good deal if she wanted to stay here at Haero and become educated and grand . . . but when lessons were over for the day, and she could get away from aunt and her fidgets, it was so delightful to steal down here, though Ezekiel pretended never to see her. But he could not hide himself. She watched him bending down, and stretching, and lifting the heavy burdens. How straight he was as he stood with the herring-barrel on his shoulder. How stately he looked, whatever he was doing. A thrill of pleasure passed through her as she watched him.

But this joy did not last long. Gunvor came down and took away Irmild with her;

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she came down every evening and took her away. Finally, she forbade her to go there, and Irmild obeyed unquestioningly.

Besides, she could always see Ezekiel. She could go up on to the mound opposite—from there she could see all they were doing down in the salting-house.

And then she revered Gunvor as a goddess, who, in return for full obedience, had promised to give her all that was good in life; therefore it would not do to rebel against her. She also saw that Gunvor was genuinely anxious for her good, and she took some trouble to please her; she was not sure there was anyone else who cared about her.

Besides, she must always have someone to love devotedly; it was a necessity, that, like physical hunger, had made itself felt within her, and, feeding on her, had grown to large proportions—a wonderfully consuming, agreeable feeling, mixed with a half-frightened reverence and a vague, timid humility. If Gunvor of Haero wished to put both her feet on her neck and crush her into the mud, it was her full right.

There was an ecstasy in loving her; moreover, she was so good and so calm and so strong that she influenced one with a look.

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It was a pleasing contrast to her own nature ; it gave her confidence to look into such a steady eye and to feel the well-formed, strong hand stroking her hair.

She would throw herself down before Gunvor with tears in her eyes, when they were sitting together at night by the great hearth fireplace ; and Gunvor received the wild devotion, glad that she had taken her up and could care for her. Aunt Vikka had Irmild under her special care, and she was kept in a constant state of mild surprise over her pupil's unexpected sayings and doings.

But Irmild could not stand much of Aunt Vikka at a time. When the latter shook her white head and began to explain how one ought to behave, the true-hearted old creature felt rather uneasy, if she happened to look at her pupil. When Irmild's small, restless, green eyes appealed to her, they would work with hypnotic force and compel her to grant a few moments' respite.

When the old lady went away she would jump up and open the window quickly, that she might be able to breathe, and drink in the air slowly and greedily, and then rest her head on the table to cool herself. What made the air so stifling ? she asked herself. Over her bed she had a picture that was

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very precious to her. She had been given it by a Spanish sailor. It represented the Virgin Mary walking among the stars with her head in a half-moon. At the side there was a big green cardboard angel with red wings. The Virgin had a shimmering blue dress and a chocolate-coloured heart placed in the middle of her chest, and flames broke out from the top of it. This calm, brown heart with the huge flames had strongly appealed to Irmild. At home, at Myrland, she had thrown herself on her knees before it and cried, in a wild, thirsty desire for something. . . . Still she would do the same thing when she had sent Aunt Vikka away like that.

But there were times when it was nice to have the old lady. For instance, in the evening when it was dark, and in the night when she woke up after a bad dream; then a great fear of the dark night came over her, and no one was then more willing than she to acknowledge the authority of Aunt Vikka, nor more quick to seek protection with her. For the old lady always found some remedy; she taught her hymns that soothed her. Specially comforting was, "O Holy Spirit, teach us faith and love!" The tune of it inspired her with the idea of a refuge from the fears which oppressed her.



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Sometimes in the evening, too, before she went to bed, she suffered from a feeling of unrest—her heart throbbed in nervous agitation.

This was when she had been amusing herself with all sorts of weird ideas till they quite took possession of her mind. She would lie and say to herself in despair: "What shall I do? Shall I go down and kill Gunvor of Haero in return for all she has done for me?—she, whom I love to distraction—or shall I go down to the judge's house and turn on the water, and destroy everything on the place? . . . One of these things I must do; now I have simply to choose. . . . What is more, I could set fire to the place, and save Mr. Falck when he is in danger of being burnt!" And so it would go on till she was distraught with evil fancies and sleep was impossible. Then she had recourse to Aunt Vikka for in her room there was peace. There she was never haunted by these terrible thoughts.

And Aunt Vikka more than once let her take her night's rest with her.

Each time, with the same infinite calm, she rose, lighted the candle, and looked in Henry Schmied's old medical book to see if there were any cure for the fever of youth. She

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used to put elder-leaves into her bed and make her repeat the words:—

“Elder-leaf, thy power display,  
Fever plague for me allay;  
Elder-leaf, thy spell has won,  
Fever heat and pain I’ve none!”

This had a soothing effect.

And then there was “Our Father,”—a refuge sure and safe. Sometime she had not got further than the fourth petition ere Irmild was asleep.

Aunt Vikka had said that it would be better towards spring, but it was not so; on the contrary, it grew worse. One night Irmild could not sleep; she had discovered that she loved the judge. Now she had met him every evening in the week, either when she was walking with Aunt Vikka or with somebody else; and he always talked to them, but he never looked at her!

It was impossible, however, for her to do anything but love him! . . . She could not lie here; she must speak to somebody—speak, speak of him. She must go in and wake up Aunt Vikka.

And she had no pity on the small, tired head, that in the white, fluted nightcap lay so

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comfortably sunk down into the eiderdown pillow. She shook her.

"I must talk to you, auntie! I have been lying alone an eternity, and I am so weary of it. Fancy, I thought he was here—the judge; tell me, what do you think of him? Why does he wear his moustaches so long? They are like Lajla's!"

Aunt Vikka opened her tired eyes with an effort; she was so often waked up nowadays, and afterwards she could not sleep.

"Poor child," she said mildly, and did not even try to prevent it when Irmild, lithe as a willow, nearly wound herself about her.

She looked uneasy.

"Oh, my poor child, I really can't understand what you mean by saying that the judge is in here. What a strange thought!" and she rose and went with her and sat down on her bed.

There were no more elder-leaves left, so she gave her wormwood—it was good for many things, especially for heat in the blood and dreams—and then she said, "Our Father" with her—this was always the best remedy.

The judge's house was not far from the old mansion at Haero, and had, like all the rest of the island, once belonged to that estate. It

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lay in a delightful position facing the south. The garden, which was very productive, led into a grove on one side, and from this the place derived its name. Quietness had reigned at The Grove ever since the new judge had settled there. People did not like this; it seemed as if he did not care about them.

It had been just the contrary in the old judge's time. He was interested in his neighbours, and wanted to know how they were getting on. He generally got to know what they were having for dinner, and none of them ever went out to a card party without his knowing both what they had to eat and what the stakes were.

And never did he pass the chemist's shop in the evening, and see that the chemist was not at home, without asking everybody he met: "I wonder where the chemist has gone to-night. Does anybody know what has become of the chemist? He is not at the rector's!" And he got to know it, for next day he could say to the chemist: "Well, what about the card party at the Ōwres' yesterday?"

But this judge never asked such questions, so, probably, he knew only the most potent facts. And he never invited people to visit him either, though there was said to be much

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cognac in his house, and though he sent for ankers of wine from abroad. In one way the ladies thought it a pity he was not married. It was more awkward from a society point of view—but that might be remedied; he was not more than forty.

Some said that he was engaged to the housekeeper, Mina Yoñs, but nobody could believe that; they chose to believe anything rather than that. . . . They were allowed to.

Falck was not a man to stop their tongues. “Goodness knows,” he would say, “what the women would do without something to discuss over their tea!”

And he considered that people couldn't be other than their natures, so it did not occur to him to reproach them in any way. The only thing he cared about was that he himself should be left in peace.

For this reason he liked the long assize journeys. On the mainland, where he had lived before, he had contracted a liking for them. The winter evenings, when he sat in his sledge, muffled up to the ears, and listened to the sound of the horses' feet on the hard ground, were a solace to him to some extent. It was indeed exceedingly peaceful when the stars twinkled in the sky, or the moon shone out and the earth was covered with a soft

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radiance. When the runners of the sledge crunched the snow beneath him, and glided swiftly on, he would sink deeper into his furs, with a sense that nothing could reach him now.

The river, as it rushed down to the wide, dark pool above the fall, brought with it every feeling of evil—all he knew of sin and sorrow in this world. And it slipped away between its ice-fringed banks down into the deep eddy where everything goes down. When this was passed peace again reigned without.

Within himself Edmund Falck was bound to a lifelong solitary imprisonment. This was his sentence, and he was resigned to it.

Here at Haero he found some interest in the long journeys by boat; it was pleasant to lie undisturbed among the warm rugs in the boat, and to listen to the opening roar of the storm, and hear the people talk of the strange things that happen when "The Father himself" comes up and throws the cod from a depth of five hundred feet, and hurls them into the peat-moss, and when rocks on the beach, big as houses, are shifted far up on land.

This talk about "The Father himself"

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sounded so childlike and fresh; it seemed that when he came so—buffeting the masts and tearing the sails—it was like the visit of an old and dear friend.

Wonderful, that he filled one's ears full of things that had been long forgotten! The memories of childhood did not seem to have deserted Falck; they were no longer ashamed of him, but came back with greetings from his mother.

Good heavens! He saw himself as a small boy in the nursery resolving to mount high and conquer the world, stronger than Alexander, nobler than Scipio. . . . Then the north-west would come, capricious and fresh, and speak in his ear: "Do you remember your first love?"

Yes, surely it blew on his cheeks and straight into his heart. Oh, of course, he remembered . . . how sweet and tender she was, the pale little girl! "She should be called the Snow Queen," he had said to himself—but he never dared to say it to her. Many years after he saw her grown up. Then a strange sensation passed through him to the inmost fibres of his nerves—there was still hidden in the depths of his soul something of the snow-white purity of the love he once had felt. And he had been glad

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of this; he had thought that there was still some capacity for goodness in him, which time had not entirely robbed him of.

He remembered, too, how he used to go about dreaming the dreams of childhood, and living his days in eagerness and haste—blind to the realities of life; and he called to mind that time when the winter was so long, and he so yearned for the spring, that he felt he could not endure the waiting. . . . At last one evening they were planting in the garden, and next day in school a sudden irresistible longing took hold of him with the thought: “Oh, now the plants are growing in the garden at home, and there will be lots of flowers there, and I’ve got to sit here!”

“What is the matter?” asked the master. He could not tell his thought to any one. But it was impossible to hold out any longer, and so he burst out into a violent fit of crying, and they had to let him go. Then he ran home in feverish haste and into the garden. When he got there he found the plants with limp, hanging leaves; they were not yet rooted—summer had not come then!

Afterwards he calmed himself and grew more indifferent and dull, for he could not endure waiting like that. It was this that developed into the worst fault in his character.



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He did not possess the spirit of patience ; he had not strength to endure a time of waiting —so he took what was nearest. . . . Strange that all these memories should come before him again during the long journeys by boat. It was the north-west that brought them ; it blew so gently on all around. And the dreams of his youth turned round and granted him forgiveness.

On the whole he was very comfortable here at Haero. He had arranged his house to his satisfaction ; it was full of things that reminded him of the time when he had *lived*, and travelled half the world over to find his share of the glory of the earth and the seven heavens. Those travels were behind him. The Grove was enough for him now.

And very pleasant it was there, especially in his own study and in the little sitting-room next to it. Here he kept his treasures ; among the many pictures and busts and so on, there were things of value, relics of ancient times. The room held for him a little piece of Italy. Above the sofa was the picture of a golden-haired Magdalen dressed in purple ; near it, robed in gleaming cloth of silver, stood that Catherine who trampled kings under her foot.

Over the grand piano there hung a collection

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of weapons. There were Turkish scimitars, long, curved hunters' knives, and Toledo swords with silver hilts.

And here and there among plants and draperies an Etruscan vase, a Greek god, a Tanagra figure, suggested by a subtle harmony of line and colour, the spirit of past ages, hovering here like mild music. Here was a haven of refuge where the world could not pursue him.

When he was lying in his *chaise-longue* under the oriental drapery, with his friend Delfin on the panther skin in front of the fire, and flowers blooming in the window, and, near at hand, his good cigars and full baccarat goblet—on the whole, there was nothing else to wish for.

When the warm days came the garden would be a pleasant spot, he thought.

Last summer, when he came here to look at the place, he had discovered its rare attractions. It was so secluded—shut in as it was by walls on all sides except on the south. To sit in there through the long bright evenings, when the wind and the leaves were at rest, with the air scented by closed flower-cups, and the dew glistening in the folds of the lady's mantle—this would be a delightful thing to do. Yes, he had fully

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realised the possibilities of this garden: the immortal god of youth surely traversed its paths, and from his brimming cup poured forth the wine. . . . Indeed, he praised the gods that he had come to Haero. Here he could sit at ease and laugh at what he would—what further happiness did he require?

On such a night as this, when the air is warm and clear, and the shadows do not fall too thick for him to see the rings of smoke from his cigar, and his glass with the sweet, red wine, he does not know at all what occupies his thoughts; he only feels that all the place begins to move and glides on gently down a stream—and all the while an unutterable calm pervades the twilight. He drinks his wine. He begins to think that there is nought which can disturb his peace—not even the spirit of melancholy, latent within his breast, which sometimes breaks its bounds at nightfall; this ghost of his dead hopes is wont to re-appear when thoughts of ideals not attained, of glorious deeds not done, beset his mind.

Once he had been on the high-road to fame, with all eyes fixed on him in expectation. No one doubted but that he had left obscurity behind him for ever.

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Good Lord, it was droll to recall the boundless imaginations of youth ! Of course, he had expected this royal highness, this ideal man within him, to emerge from his hiding-place and come forth, covering him with glory and honour ; but he had not condescended to come forth. Perhaps there was no one who had cared to prepare the way ! Well, it didn't matter, after all . . . when one had one's horse, one's dog, and one's work—that was necessary, and Mina Yoñs—what more could one wish ? . . . And the pleasant dreamy sensation regains its hold on him ; he drains from his goblet a secret blessing, golden brown or ruby red ; he does not know if it is time or eternity that has begun. Could eternal happiness, that mystical conception, bring more true bliss ?

It was mostly in the twilight and towards night that Falck experienced those pleasant vague sensations. In the daytime he was wont to be exacting, creating unthought-of difficulties in the office, sometimes destroying fondest illusions of comfort in the heart of Balle, his clerk. Inside the Assize Court he was another man than he of the boat. As soon as he had taken his place there his eyes assumed a new expression. This was patent to all.

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Sometimes he went out coursing with his friend Delfin. This was a noble English harrier, that never offended his heart and shared his interests in the most incredible way.

Lately they had both been greatly interested in the introduction of hares on the small adjacent isles ; and they promised themselves much good sport as the result, for there were no foxes, and open water lay on all sides.

Then he amused himself with Science. In calm weather he might be seen walking down to the boat with his marine chart, lead-weight, dredge, and spy-glass. It amused him to study the flora and fauna of the sea—through the marine spy-glass to gaze down into the sea-weed, which with its shining, bronze branches swayed to and fro with the cold lower current, while the small sea animals crept over the dark bottom, and large bright fish glided forward in the water.

One almost ought to be a boy again to enjoy all such things.

Sometimes he took young people with him too. They could give him illusions. He had been known to take, among others, Irmild and the rector's son ; but he had given up doing this. The rector's son was studying at a university, and was now so taken up by the

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rights of man that he regarded the whole thing as an opportunity for holding forth on this matter.

Irmild had no mind for such things. She was more interested in the fishes; she bent her graceful body over the sea-wall. A certain mystical joy, mixed with fear, came over her each time the dredge came up. It was as if she herself had come up from this gloomy place and now suddenly saw her own world again through the spy-glass. Often as she looked at the judge there was in her black eyes a greenish-blue light, varying as the sea-tints, a strangely attractive force as of phosphorescent waters, a suggestion of that power by which certain sea animals can adhere to anything they wish.

He would not have her with him—that he was fully determined on.

It was a fine evening in May when Fru Elin and her daughter took the path over the hill on their way home. . . . They had been to Myrland to see Sarah, Irmild's mother.

Fru Elin stopped at the top to take breath, and looked about her with a quiet smile. For the sun was setting in golden glory out among the rocks, and from the fir-tops on the hill-side the note of the blackcock sounded. Down among the stones on the slope she could

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see them playing, while the young hens were sitting in the bushes looking on, ere they could decide to take part in it. The cocks were equipped for the love season; they strutted about with fresh, gaudy colours on neck and head, trailing their wings and showing the white under their tail feathers.

Fru Elin looked at them coldly.

“How stupid they are, poor things; they keep their eyes shut. I believe one could catch them with one’s hands,” she said.

Gunvor made no reply; she only smiled.

Farther down on the slope they came across a young hare sitting quite unconcerned, licking its paws and looking at them with its mild, brown eyes.

“Mother, don’t go too fast,” said Gunvor, and she sat down cautiously opposite the hare, which had not moved. How lovely it was here! What harmony there rose from all the sights and sounds—from beasts, and trees, and air and rippling water!

What an echo it found in her heart! How the blackcock poured forth their notes of love! She felt the sweetness of it all in every fibre of her being.

Fru Elin was not so keenly sensitive to sounds, and took it calmly. “Now we must go on,” she said.

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At the bottom of the hill the road led straight across to the garden at The Grove, and they saw the judge coming towards them with a gesture of greeting.

"I've been told by a young man recently that one ought not to forget the rights of man! Is there no one who will *teach me* my rights as a tenant and neighbour?" he said.

Fru Elin smiled and looked kindly at him, while Gunvor had enough to do to defend herself against Delfin's joyful greeting.

The judge looked at Gunvor and went on lightly: "Now that you gracious ladies have been down and made sure that the cure is a complete one, and Thorkel no longer beats Sarah, perhaps you will look after the other neighbours too? I can't promise that you will find anything highly interesting here; but do not go past my door without paying me a visit. Please come in!" And he led them in through the verandah.

"Notice how everything welcomes you here," he said eagerly, leading Fru Elin to a place on the sofa under the Persian baldachin. For the sun at that moment shot a shaft of light into the room, bringing out its subtle harmonies of colour and lending an additional glamour to its beauties.



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In one window there were some white roses which filled the room with their faint, pungent scent.

"That's a new rose," said the judge; "an Eden rose. One ought to believe, I suppose, that the roses of Eden faded long ago?"

Gunvor replied, smiling: "Yes; but what tulips you have—that window full of them!"

"Yes, I'm very conservative in my tastes. I have the same mania for tulips that people had two hundred years ago—and still earlier, for even such a sensible man as Pliny used to rave about them. He says one ought to hang them in smoke, and then put them into Greek wine, in order to make the purple in them glow. I have not tried that, for when the sun shines on them, as it does now, it is enough—for sensible people."

"Yes, you are too conservative! Everybody thinks so. A hardened conservative!" she said, laughing, and she sat down at her mother's side.

"Well, I am glad of the reputation! It couldn't well be otherwise, I suppose. Of course, one must be registered, and people here are not given to making subtle distinctions. It would be more convenient to be a tulip; there are five thousand species of them.

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. . . May I offer you a cup of coffee? Couldn't we drink fragrant Mocha to the closer approximation of the human evolution to the tulips?"

Mina Yoñs came in with the coffee, and Fru Elin at once noticed that it was Mocha.

"It is delicious," she said, as she sipped the coffee with complacency; and she became quite talkative, telling the judge how things had changed here within her recollection, every now and then making those striking little remarks which were characteristic of Fru Elin when she was in a good humour, and which the judge especially appreciated at their true worth.

Gunvor talked to Mina Yoñs, admired her wool-work, listened to a long, doleful story about Serianna the kitchen-maid, and finally won her heart by inviting her to Haero to Fru Elin's great birthday gathering.

The ladies of the neighbourhood were not nice to Mina Yoñs. First, they did not consider it decent that she should dream of becoming the judge's wife, and, secondly, there might be things that were still more improper, and for these reasons they would have nothing to do with her.

But that did not prevent some of them coming to admire the judge's tulips. Only

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this morning there had been visitors of this kind.

Gunvor did not think Mina Yoñs very objectionable. She was a stout, timid blonde, with drooping eyelids. She did not appear to Gunvor to be very ambitious. It seemed to her that the other ladies had no right to be so suspicious. When she went out with the coffee-tray, Gunvor gave her her kindest nod.

The judge was in a brilliant mood. He went into the cellar himself for Niersteiner-Glöck. It ought to be drunk just now, he said. One could be sure of getting the wonderful light effect on the green glasses and enjoying the delicious coolness of the wine.

This time he asked to be allowed to drink to the health of the "Noble Mistress of Haero." In Arabian temples there was said to be a wine more cooling than a wind on desert plains—a cure for all diseases of body or mind. The priest of the temple put it away, and kept it till the lapse of years fitted it for the renewing of spiritual powers, and, while they waited for its ripening, it lay clear and shining in its wooden casks. Somehow Fru Elin reminded him of this wine . . . and he knew where the connection was, too; when people have borne life as courageously

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as Fru Elin they have reached the highest form of beauty: the power of a well-seasoned life—that is what the noble Arabian wine is a symbol of.

Fru Elin smiled quietly and drank with him. In a few minutes she rose. She had promised Mina Yoñs to see her hotbeds—and then they must think about going home.

“Then will you stay here?” he said to Gunvor. He sat down beside her.

“Yes,” she said, smiling; “I would rather look round the room.”

She got up and walked about.

“What a pretty little thing!” She pointed to an ornamental box inlaid with costly Florentine mosaic. As she took hold of it, it flew open. Inside was a small, ragged book. She looked at him. He coloured, and she put the box quickly in its place again with the feeling of having committed an indiscretion.

“It is my A B C book,” he said, looking away. “I read from it with my mother; she died when I was eight.”

There was a silence.

He had said “mother,” with a gentle devotion in his voice as if he were filled with reverence together with a certain fear lest somebody should notice it.

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Gunvor passed on, and seemed quite absorbed by other things.

"Come and sit down," he said suddenly. "You must tell me what you think about my reputation. Are you also among those who complain of my being a hardened conservative?"

"No, I don't find that fault with you. There is never anything that quite satisfies you! Such conservatism I think we want; we need to have our standard raised!"

"Do you know that people complain very much of *you*?"

"Well," she smiled quite indifferently, "they must be allowed to do that!"

"It is impossible to place you; you belong neither to the old school nor the new. Fru Hammer complains that you have no standpoint, and Fru Jeannette says you have so many faults! 'Ladies are generally prone to the same faults,' says Fru Jeannette; she likes men much better."

Gunvor smiled.

"Don't laugh," he said, shaking his head, though he thought she looked charming as she did it. "The list of your sins is not finished! Somebody else charges you with not being a women's-rights woman either! That is Fru Schwane — she was here yesterday."

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A women's-rights woman! that, from the language point of view, is a rather comical expression. If I examined it you would see what interesting meanings it could have; but, when one thinks of the matter, women's rights are no other than men's right's—why won't you be a men's-rights woman?"

She was arranging Froken Yoñs's balls of wool.

"You should not talk like that," she said rather impatiently, "but, whether you mean it or not, you are right!" She looked up with her alert expression. "Is it true that you are a member of the Ethical Union formed by Fru Hammer?" she asked, smiling, after a pause.

He looked at her without answering.

It did not become the serious mouth to be so serious. What a face she had! In everyday life it was reserved and expressionless, almost impenetrable, but her smile poured forth upon the world joy-giving light, and lent her features a womanly softness, reminding him of the radiant freshness of roses.

There was another short silence.

Gunvor leant back and looked around her. It seemed to her it was so fitting to restrain one's talk in these rooms. Besides, she knew it was the judge's way to speak in jerks, with

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pauses that, so to speak, wove a connection between the different subjects. Moreover, she could not tell why, the pauses were the best of all; they gave such a pleasant sensation of sweet peacefulness and harmony. Yes, that was the strange part of it! she never thought they agreed so well as when they sat silent. There was such a restfulness in these silences, such evidence of mutual understanding.

The shadow of a smile passed over her lips as she sat there.

"What difficulty are you trying to solve?" he asked again in his sudden way. "What people spend their time thinking about is generally not worth the trouble," he went on. "The things that are really important must take their chance! For instance, an international competition in designs for a new coat-of-arms for the country has lately been opened. The time limit of this competition is ninety days! The schemes and drawings sent in will be exhibited to the public. First prize, 30,000 francs. Is it this that you are thinking out?"

She looked at him reprovingly.

"Please don't talk so. The thing I am trying to solve," she said slowly, "what it would give me great relief to know, is how to

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make life less hard for people—to ease them of their burdens!”

“You should not attempt anything so impossible! People will not choose to have it anything but hard; you can notice that in their religions and in their God, whom they always make after their own image. How many horrible conceptions of the Deity are there, if I may ask? . . . And *happiness*!—you should not use that word so frivolously—happiness is God’s secret; He does not betray it. . . .”

“Yes, but under His sky! You sit too much indoors, sir—and dream——”

He laughed.

“No, I believe one gets dissatisfied with being outdoors too much, and I am very comfortable in here. . . . It is here I have discovered God’s secret! and so I am at peace, whatever others may be suffering. . . . Have you seen my *Ignoto*? I found her in a dirty little shop at Verona. She resembles a woman that I once knew—for that reason I bought the picture.”

He took Gunvor into his study.

It was the portrait of a woman of the fifteenth century. Gunvor undoubtedly felt a pang in her heart, for it was as if the young woman were standing alive before



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her in silent suffering ; she was draped entirely in black, with a white kerchief wound tightly round her head, revealing its fine lines ; this kerchief was drawn over the forehead to the eyes, which were large, and burned with the secret they would not betray.

“I wanted to show you this, too ;” he pointed out to her the ancient figure of a saint ; “he reads my morning mass to me. Have you ever seen anything so infinitely exhausted with weeping ? The eyes have lost their colour, and look at the mouth ? Doesn’t it look as if it were bleeding ? How people must have suffered in those times . . . and how deep the souls must have been to be able to suffer so. . . . How people must have revelled in making others suffer for a painter ever to learn to paint like that ! . . . You see, that is what I am saving myself from !”

She looked at him sideways. His voice had relapsed into the strange deep tone she had heard before. There *was* something that troubled him ! She looked down on the table. There were small pots, half-filled with different kinds of gravel and pebbles.

“Those are from the bottom of the sea,” he said in another voice ; “I was just labelling them when you came in. Look ! there

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is your mother going into the stables with Miss Yoñs. Now you shall sit there, in that chair, and I'll bring you your glass. Wine is a grand thing—it's God's secret! . . . Your health, Mother of Haero—our liege-lady!"

He lifted up his glass into the sunbeam that crossed the table just above it.

She smiled and raised her glass to his and then sank back into the chair again. The sunbeam was playing upon her hair.

"How magnificent it is—your not letting people call you 'Miss'! That title is really utterly unsuitable for you: you have nothing in common with small misses; and it is such an ordinary, half-ironically protective term of address this 'Miss'—a diminutive, that in its true signification only applies to young girls. It is simply an impertinence to apply it to a grown-up person. . . . People are so incredibly stupid! How many know the meaning of what they say? There is only one class of persons intelligent enough to be civil—only one language that allows any possibility of it! Is it not so, madame?"

She was sitting half-buried in thought and did not answer.

"You seem to be quite alone up here," he said suddenly.

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"Do you think so?" She half turned from him. His smile was strange—tired, and yet very daring.

"Why are you not more often at the social gatherings here?" he asked. "Why do you come so late and leave so early?" he continued.

"Because——"

"Because it does not amuse you! Yes. You may as well say it—because people are so terribly mediocre; you may say it with truth!"

"I find it so *triste*."

"You ought not to. How can you help the fact that the human evolution has only reached the stage when three dozen of us in company only produce such a result that the very lamps might go out from *ennui*? We vegetate instead of thinking; perhaps it is just as well. . . ."

Gunvor began to laugh. "How absurd you are," she said.

"It is true what I am saying, but *you* can't help it—it is not you that has invented human nature! . . . A wise man says that it takes time to get used to the ways of mankind; some people never can! Have you ever heard of Polycarp? He was in the habit of flying from place to

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place, crying out: 'O ye gods, what an age ye have destined me to live in!'"

"I am not so difficult to please as Polycarp. I am more or less content. There is so much to do; I don't think one gets time for such questions."

"I don't agree with Polycarp either; I am really quite satisfied with my lot here. But Polycarp was not very enlightened; he could search for golden apples in an ordinary kitchen garden. It was not the correct thing either to address the deities as if they were parish councillors."

"Don't you want anything more, then?"

"Yes, I rather want to reform my own character, and then I hope it will get warm at the North Pole!"

"Do you know what I am thinking of you? Your way of talking is like a great cloak that you wrap yourself up in!"

"Do you know what I am thinking of *you*? It is a pity you are so alert always. It is really a strange land up here, and with strange people in it! There is the sea—the cold sea—in all of them, and in you especially. . . . It was warm here in the early ages. Do you know that? To think that evergreen plane-trees and wild grapes grew *here*! Now everything is changed—dark tales, dim dreams,

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and deep, still eyes reign in this place. Yes, it *is* too cold."

"The temperature of your room is too warm," laughed Gunvor. "You sit too much indoors, sir!"

"What do you mean? The room temperature is such an important part of our culture. You really don't believe in anything—neither priest or prophet! What kind of being are you? You have absorbed too much fresh air! It is as I say, there is sea in you; that's the matter with you!"

Gunvor interrupted him in a lively way. "Yes, that's what it is! How shall I teach people to value fresh air? That's what they need, all of them. You can't imagine how fierce a battle I have to wage against impure air. What a struggle it is to get open windows and doors when I am travelling! Women are specially difficult. They will on no condition part with the air that their lungs have once exhaled; it *must* be breathed in again. Such conservatism is not good . . . and carried into other matters it is no better. . . ."

"So you have the weakness to wish to be a Providence to those who breathe impure air?"

"Why not, if I only could? But I will not travel any more."

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“Why?”

She turned towards him and laughed a little. “Well, I thrive better up here. Down in the South I think I notice much more how many small and paltry things there are in the world.”

“Poor thing!” he commented.

“Yes, and the worst of it is that what most people consider immensely interesting I generally find rather dull. I am nothing but a coast bird, you know, so I could not live down there. Here on the shore there is always something that appeals to me.”

“It is as I say, you suffer from an excess of air; you ought to take some medicine for it. Do as I have been doing lately—read Carlyle’s ‘Heroes and Hero Worship.’ . . . It is on the table!” Then he went on. “The best thing a human being can do is to worship great men; that is the only thing we have to do, says the great Carlyle. Aren’t you ashamed now of troubling about other matters? . . . Your morals are defective, madame, and your sympathies too! The great Carlyle says that the world’s history ought to be nothing but the history of great men, and it *is* simply that; this he says on five successive occasions at least.”

She laughed again. “That seems to me

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to be very doubtful. Then, he doesn't believe in it himself! And I agree with him. I certainly do not believe in it. History is so badly written; that is perhaps the reason why we are no better."

"Yes, but according to the great Carlyle it is a sign of petty interference to criticise the great men of history; they are not meant for that, but to be believed in."

She looked at him with a calm, half-dreamy expression.

"And I ought not to expose myself any more. Can't we talk of something else?" she said.

"About your fiancé, for instance! Do you believe in *him*?"

She looked smilingly in front of her. "Yes, there is something in him that reminds me of the saying, 'His is an open book; everybody can read him.'"

"And perhaps one always reads the same thing—or are there ever any new chapters?"

She did not quite like his tone. She looked up quickly. "He is different from what he used to be. His nature is a healthy one, and goes on developing. It ought to be the same with us. . . ." She rose and looked about for her cloak.

He also rose, smiling. "Don't look so

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severe! I'm afraid my capacity for further development is very small. But I have always admired your fiancé! As you say, he keeps so incredibly young and fresh; but he alarms me by being so truthful that even if he wishes to tell a lie he cannot. And then he is such a Radical, he takes my breath away."

Gunvor looked beseechingly at him. "When he is your neighbour, then you will have to be friends."

"Don't try to mingle the ancient with the modern. The one is almost lifeless, the other is very much alive," he answered.

"Look here!" He showed her a big picture over the grand piano. It was a photo-engraving of the antique Doric Colonnade in the Church of S. Pietro in Vincoli at Rome. "Look at those pillars. Centuries have passed over them, yet they still stand—so grandly that one feels less weak and paltry by looking at them. That's it, that's what I like to look upon—something to support me. . . . Your friend Svein goes his way rejoicing with the favours of Providence showered upon him. I'll try to be virtuous enough not to grudge him his good fortune." He opened the grand piano and sat down.

She could not make out what he was playing;



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the chords seemed to be halting questioningly, as if they sought to fix a sentiment they but half understood. Then he went on to Beethoven's sonata in A flat major—the *Marcia funèbre sulla morte d'un eroe*.

He played it in a manner strangely suggestive of his own voice when it sank into deep bass accents. It seemed as if he were following some serious, much cherished thought to its last resting-place. But there was no sorrow.

The note of resignation to the inevitable was uppermost. Sky-soaring thoughts, pure desires, and sweet, bright hopes—these were life's victims, these the natural prey of that which grasped the proudest, the most beautiful. . . . Therefore one must not bemoan the loss of these unduly, only ensure for them a decent burial. . . . The subtly scornful note now died away. It was succeeded by a grand new movement, in which rang power—wide-ranging, deep and darkly glorious.

Beyond the bounds of earth it passed; the heavens opened, yielding from space to space; and further still it cleaved its way into the wide, vast realm of ether, into infinity.

Gunvor rose again. It was now twilight. The dark Ignoto on the wall could be faintly seen, only the eyes gazed at her through

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the dimness—their secret pain now filling her with sudden apprehension as their appealing gaze met her own.

He rose from the piano, and went over and helped Gunvor on with her cloak. “There is your mother,” he said.

She did not answer; she went out before him. “I wish somebody would play that to me when I am dying,” she said, when she got out into the passage and gave him her hand.

He pressed it in silence.

Outside in the garden they met Fru Elin, who had come from the stables with Mina Yöns.

“Now you shall be rowed home with every mark of honour,” said the judge gaily. “Anton, put out the boat! the flag at the top and all three men at the oars!”

He followed them down.

“When shall we see you at Haero?” asked Fru Elin, and gave him her hand.

“At once—that is—in half-an-hour.”

Gunvor followed him with her eyes as he went up the hill again.

The man was a strangely complex being and full of contrasts. Slender and strongly built, already bent in the shoulders, his head held a little on one side, he appeared a mixture of strength and weakness—the weakness

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attendant on a sedentary life. His manner of walking—easy and elastic, but with a certain weakness at the knees—hung together, so to speak, with his whole personality. He stood there waving his hand until the boat passed the promontory.

“He drinks too much,” said Fru Elin. “Poor fellow, it is probably true what they say ; I could see it merely from the way he touched the glass.”

She said it as if softened and saddened. She pitied him. She shook her head.

“And Froken Yoñs ! It would have been better for him to have had old Domenica.”

Gunvor made an impatient gesture. And nothing more was said till the boat reached the landing-stage. Then she turned her head and looked outwards. “Listen to the voices—the voices from over the sea,” she said.

Fru Elin knew very well that such voices could be heard, and that they might be premonitory signs. But it was a long time since Fru Elin had had any experience of this.

“Oh no, that’s nothing,” she said, and stepped ashore.

## CHAPTER III.

### MIDSUMMER NIGHT

It was a day in June. Svein Torgersen had announced that he was coming, and Anders Halskar had gone off with the twelve-oared boat to fetch him at the nearest stopping-place of the steamer.

They were expected to arrive at midnight. Everything was ready. The old dower-house near the road was resplendent with fresh paint, and its windows shone in the sunlight. Aunt Vikka had been down once again to see that nothing was missing; the consulting-room was adorned with greenery, and in the sitting-room she had put her white rose.

Gunvor was not at home that day. She was at the big mission meeting at the parish church. A large number of people had gathered there from the places around, and the clergy and godly laymen ministered to their spiritual needs.

But when the services and the meetings were over, she managed to gather some of the wives around her down in the parish public room. There she began to impress

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upon them the fact that cleanliness is next to godliness, and helpful in the strengthening of their souls, and that they should not shut out God's fresh air from their houses, for with light and air and sunshine came regenerative power.

This appeal was addressed specially to the women, but the men came in too and listened—people were standing tightly packed in the doorway. For it was characteristic of Gunvor of Haero that when she talked on any subject—even if she dealt only with the question of washing oneself—she did it in so convincing a manner that her hearers were the better for it.

As they stood there with open mouths they heard that it was of national importance to follow the path of cleanliness as well as of godliness, that, in fact, it was impossible to attain true holiness without purity in all its aspects.

It was strange that though the subjects she touched on were of the simplest, they gave new ideas to the people, and presented the meaning of God's Word to them in another and more intelligible aspect than the ordinary services in church.

But this mission of Gunvor's did not please the clergy.

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The curate had no objection to her teaching the people hygiene, but the occasion was never well chosen. Now to-day, for instance, it was likely to distract their minds from greater things. Besides, she exaggerated the importance of sanitation and made use of misleading expressions.

The rector was decidedly against it. He had no patience with such unnecessary fuss. Besides, it was his opinion that women should be quiet and not take upon themselves to teach. He would refer to 1 Timothy ii. 12. He could not understand either that people cared to listen to such commonplaces.

There were others of the same opinion as the rector. Of course, the rector himself had been known to talk commonplaces, but then they were clothed in an imposing garb, and were uttered in an inspired tone and with solemn gestures, so it was no wonder that many people took them for specially clever sayings.

When the meeting was over and Gunvor had come out, the curate was waiting for her at the bottom of the stairs.

"Are you going by boat, or will you be coming my way?" he said; "we have only just finished our meeting."

"I shall take the road across the dunes,"

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she said shortly ; she was tired, and he worried her.

When she came home she sat with her mother for a while, and, when she had made sure that all was in order and Irmild had gone to bed, she went down to the shore to wait for Svein.

The long, even beach was of sand, which the sea had rolled and ground very fine and silky soft ; every now and then heather, or branches of blackberry bushes, thrust themselves up and crept down to the seaweed that lay along the shore like a dark wave.

She loosed her boat, and, getting into it, rowed into the open.

She could hear the breakers out beyond the point ; . . . they were beating dully against the loose stones . . . it all belonged to the music of night, to the happy song of anticipation.

Some small waves came on and stole up to the boat, lifting it and rocking it to and fro ; then it swung in to the shore again.

Up on the mound above the salting-house someone was singing.

It was Boot Tobine ; she was not quite sane, and it was understood that she never went to bed on summer nights. She was singing her fishing-song, and the air was so

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clear that it seemed to Gunvor as if every word came down to her in the boat.

And Boot Tobine was just beginning the song again as she slowly rowed towards the shore :—

“ Three fishers went sailing out into the west,  
Out into the west as the sun went down,  
Each thought of the woman who loved him the best,  
And the children stood watching them out of the town :

For men must work, and women must weep ;  
And there's little to earn, and many to keep ;  
Tho' the harbour bar be moaning,  
Tho' the harbour bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,  
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down ;  
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,

And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown :  
But men must work, and women must weep,  
Tho' storms be sudden, and waters deep,  
And the harbour bar be moaning,  
And the harbour bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands,  
In the morning gleam as the tide went down,  
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands,  
For those who will never come back to the town :  
For men must work, and women must weep,  
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,  
And good-bye to the bar and its moaning,  
And good-bye to the bar and its moaning.”



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The shadows began to fall. The bright peace of the evening grew dark because of them; they gathered like omens round the boat. Voices threatened: "I, the Lord Thy God, am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. . . ." O God, what did she know of her father's sins? Those that had come to her knowledge were as nothing compared to the dark total, but they had been enough to dim all her childhood.

That matters were not right with Boot Tobine she knew now; but what could she do? All that was possible she would do for her and all of them. . . . Did she not deserve happiness? Was it too good for her? Did it need greater strength than hers to get a grip on happiness? . . . Then she laughed at herself, took the oars and went on again.

Through the silence she heard the strong, even strokes from the twelve-oared boat.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, when Svein Torgersen's fresh voice shouted the first greeting. Then a great peace fell on her—all misgivings had vanished.

And when the boats got alongside each other, and she went over into his boat and felt the warm pressure of his hand, saw his face beaming with joy as he looked at her,

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and was carried away by a stream of gay talk, then it seemed to her that there had never been anything to be anxious about between them.

But still, when they had come in, and he took her into his arms, she received his kiss with the ominous feeling that she was about to encounter some great misfortune.

Next morning, when they had taken a walk, they went into the doctor's house to see what improvements had been made.

Of course, he found everything good—too good for him; he supposed it would be only for use in his practice. Might he ask if the left wing were not ready? Would they not be having a wedding at Haero in a few days?

She put her hand on his mouth. He took it and kissed it. He looked into her eyes. Yes, certainly they were the same that had promised to love him!

She laid her head on his shoulder for a moment in a sudden, irresistible longing to let all difficulties pass and only in blissful peace receive his love.

Why could it not be as he wanted? Why could they not be married at once?

A rash, triumphant desire to trample down all considerations—everything in her own

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nature that was standing in the way—came upon her. . . . “I don’t know,” she said, shivering. It was as if at his kiss she lost all power of thought and all strength, as if something new, stronger than thought, stirred within her; it came forth from the gloomy depths of her soul, and touched her with its magic wand, and she bent herself, overcome by a giddy feeling of joy.

Why not be perfectly happy, without shadow or restraint? Why not satisfy her longing heart? Was not the dark time past?

Fru Elin passed the window while they were still standing there. She stopped a moment and gazed in on them; her face became grey and drawn. Then she went on as if with difficulty.

Of course, she knew that Gunvor had Haero blood in her veins. . . . Would everything be uncertain hereafter?

Neither of them in the room had seen her.

Slowly Gunvor withdrew herself from his embrace. “Svein!” and she dragged him with her to the sofa; “sit down here! I have something to tell you!” She was sitting with both elbows on the table and her head in her hands; into her eyes there had come another expression.

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"Svein!" she said, smiling in a half beseeching way, "it is, after all, not only you that has had to wait. It was you yourself who made *me* wait a whole year, and now *you* must wait for me a little while."

He looked at her, radiant with joy as before, for now he was sure of her. "Dearest Gunvor, is this meant to be amusing?"

"No, Svein, quite serious! First, the house is not put in order for us—we have had so many expenses this year, and we have been obliged to send over to the boys too—but as soon as we can we shall begin with it; and secondly, Svein, it won't hurt if we get to know each other a little better first. . . . Mother wants it, and I have promised her."

She rose, walked up and down a few times, and then stopped before Svein, who was sitting as if he had heard nothing.

She took his head between her hands, held it back, and looked into his eyes. They were so smilingly blue; there was no earnestness in them.

"Svein," she said slowly, "all we have to agree upon is that we will not be married this summer—perhaps even not till—next summer."

Then he sprang up and caught her hands, with a puzzled expression on his face.

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"Why, oh why, Madame Isis?"

"Because I want it, Svein, and because we can't afford it this year. It won't matter so very much," she added beseechingly, "now that we can meet every day."

He walked about the room as if he were looking for something he could not find.

"I think this is too bad of you," he said at last hotly. "When you pose as Isis you are very trying."

"I believe you want to have your revenge on me," he went on. "Of course, you are doing this because I stayed away too long and amused myself a bit too much. You have got to know it, I suppose . . . women should not know such things; and you want to make me pay for it, I see. Tell me, what shall I do . . . please—tear out all my hair," he held his head with its crisply-curled light brown hair towards her, "and then we will cry quits," he said.

Then Irmild came and called them in to breakfast. She stopped and looked from the one to the other with a burning curiosity in her small eyes. Gunvor gave her a sign to go in first, and went up to take off her hat.

"Then that is settled! Don't you think

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yourself it will be a good thing for us to get to know each other a bit better first?" She spoke lightly, but even Torgersen felt an underlying seriousness in her tone.

"Well, you are mine anyhow!" he said; he drew her to him almost roughly.

She gently disengaged herself. "Yes," she said, almost with an effort, "I am yours!"

He drew her to him once more. "By the great gods, we will not wait a year!"

"Perhaps not," she answered wearily. "But let me go now, Svein; they are waiting for us!"

She could eat no breakfast. Fru Elin sat there, dark and silent, with a puzzled look on her face. The conversation was kept up by Torgersen, who had an excellent appetite and was busy making plans for the future. To begin with he would make money like grass.

Irmild devoured him with her eyes; she had never expected him to be so tall and fine and so exceedingly amusing. How big and red and pleasant-looking his mouth was with its neat moustache, and what a splendid set of white teeth he showed! She was fully occupied with watching these.

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Fru Elin's face brightened as the conversation continued. She looked approvingly at her daughter. When she heard that the wedding was not to take place this midsummer, she knew that the power of a woman's instinct was not yet dead in her family.

Torgersen had to take his place as the parish doctor at once, because the *locum tenens* had obtained an appointment in another place and had left.

Both Fru Elin and Gunvor thought it would be well for him to enter upon his work without delay, but Torgersen himself did not agree with them. He considered that he might have been left in peace for a little while, at least till he had properly settled into his house and seen what fishing could be got—for he did not intend to drudge more than he had ever done before; in fact, he rather thought he should go on taking things easily.

This year abroad had been a good beginning—it had induced pleasant habits, both of body and mind, which it would be a pity to lose. He accepted with pleasure all the attentions he could get. Little Gunn was remarkably quick in getting him

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hammer and nails, and he was not less pleased to have Irmild to unpack trunks and cases, hang up pictures, and help in arranging the medicine cupboard.

"But I don't admire her at all, you know," he said once to Gunvor. "I think women may be *too* thin—and she is a mere willow-rod. . . . She has come from the sea, Boot Tobine says, and there is something of the weird mystery of the sea in her looks."

Gunvor did not like this. "You mustn't say so, Svein. She is not different from the rest of us."

Torgersen laughed. "No, I won't say anything more. You yourself remind me of the sea, but not in the same unpleasant way as she does. . . ."

"You mustn't say so, Svein. You must believe that we are going to make a good woman of her."

"I am sure she will be an angel, only don't look at me like that. What strange eyes you have! Though they look at me so mildly, there is a rigid earnestness lurking behind their soft greyness. And now I am off to see the old woman at Myrland, and Mother Hopen, and all the old bodies under the sun, but I shall be back by seven o'clock; then



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I shall get you to myself, and we will take the same walk as yesterday."

By this time he had reached the boat. She waved her hand to him once more and went in to go on with her work till he came back.

As far as it was possible they took a long walk every evening, and in the morning he liked to come down into the office and spend some time with her. To Gunvor his company was a refreshing change; it satisfied a longing which she had not understood the meaning of till now.

Since her earliest youth a feeling of loneliness had pursued her, following in the train of dark memories of her home, where storms had passed over her childish soul and no soothing voice had comforted her. Gunvor could only remember her mother as always holding her ground with patient fortitude and looking to her sons for consolation in the future. When her sons might be considered lost to her, she turned to her daughter, who was proud the day she felt she had won this mother's love, which, abused and abandoned, had shrunk into reserve and now so seldom could find expression.

The child had felt that her mother could

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not give her more, and the young girl understood this too. But she had been conscious of a blank in her mind, a thirst for something that was loving and tender, for a sympathy expressed by soft hands and affectionate looks.

Now all was different. Her latent powers of loving were awakened; she no longer hedged about her feelings with walls of reserve, but gave free vent to the impulse of her young blood, and became a happier woman in this state of nature.

She was like a flower expanding in the light after long months of confinement underground. And each day brought her joy to the full; for now she was really in love with Svein—each day more so than the last.

This intimate daily intercourse with a man refreshed her. She felt that it made her stronger and happier to read his thoughts and trace the roads in his soul. She thought she understood herself better when she saw how unlike he was to her. It interested her to follow this dissimilarity as far as she could go. Sometimes it seemed as if she had got to the bottom, to what was common to them both as human beings, where a tie of blood linked their souls; and it was a

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transporting thought that it was just the unlikeness of their souls that made for such harmony in the elemental depths.

There was a sense of ease and comfort in the feeling that she could fly from her own complicated nature to this invigorating and gloriously simple personality. In fact, she had never before known what pleasantly downright beings men were, with their comparatively few and easily-found resources! She would smile at the remembrance of the manifold intricate paths in her own soul. It was not difficult to find one's way into the place where Svein's thoughts were born; their origin was in a single spacious chamber that one look sufficed to realise. It was otherwise with her mother, and even Aunt Vikka was sometimes impossible to understand.

She rejoiced that Svein was so easily comprehended; his child-like simplicity appealed to her. And then there was another thing—he had not this painful fear of being boisterous that is so usual with women and that so often checks their laughter. How he could laugh! How wonderfully he could laugh! As if there were no limits to his enjoyment!

And he was sincere too; that he said any amount of things he did not mean made no

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difference when everybody understood him. His look was always open; every one could read it.

“Is that all?” she often said to Svein—and laughed. And then she would tell him that she thought men were splendid, that they were indispensable, and that she could not possibly understand how she had been able to get on so long alone at Haero. This always put Svein into an excellent temper; he was convinced every time she said it that it was her way of expressing regret that the wedding had been put off. He always answered by asking, “How long?” even though he had been fully assured that Fru Elin’s decisions had the quality of being irrevocable.

But at any rate they had begun to cart some building material for putting the west wing in order.

And time passed very quickly.

It amused him that Gunvor should find him so remarkable. When he came home wet in the evening after having been out in the rain, or on the sea, and they had made a fire in the hearth-place, and she was sitting beside it leaning against his knee and looking up at him with her melting, light-grey eyes, it was a real pleasure to him to talk.

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“Yes, of course, I study you too!” he used to say; “that is, I think about you constantly. I understood you once for all long ago, so there’s nothing more to be done!”

And then they laughed, both of them, and he put up his hands like a spy-glass and looked at her. And she sat there with smiling eyes under her smooth brows, and with her rich brown hair shading a face to which the smile gave a wonderful radiance.

But he was not always so sure of her.

All was quiet at the judge’s house; only Delfin, who lay on the tiger-skin asleep, occasionally broke the silence with a half-choked yelp. He had had bad luck that day; now he was making up for the loss in more blissful hunting-grounds.

Falck had gone to bed, but had got up again. Why was he beginning to suffer from insomnia? He had lighted a cigar, and was sitting over his wine again. The lamp was still burning in the corner of the room, and spreading a sombre green light which blended with that of the night. High up in the sky rode the moon. Her beams fell straight into the room to him—pale, shimmering beams with mystic lustre.

It was Midsummer Night.

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He had drawn his chair up to the window that faced the grove. There, within its shadow it was midsummer night; there the king of the elves was dancing with the queen, the wood-nymph with the goblin; all good fairies and gnomes were revelling.

But if he could only think what it was that kept him awake!

There was no one in the world that could concern him; he had always made it a rule to let people manage their own affairs, and he found it a very satisfactory thing to do.

Did that sound come from the grove? Was it the pattering of the little fairies who were coming here to disturb his peace? How they pressed forward! It was too bad! And, of course, he couldn't stop them; the little folks always have their own way!

What a wonderfully fine, bright summer night! It stole into the room like a bride! It glided softly and lightly everywhere, till all things found a tongue! Such a quiet, bright summer night is not to be slept away.

But what persistence they had, the little people! Did he remember Inger Juell? Good Lord, did he remember! Had he

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not bought his Ignoto simply because she resembled her?

Now the clock struck—and now again! It was the old timepiece that had a voice as soft and silver-clear as a woman's. It told him that once more a term of time had passed him. Well, he was used to that—but as it was midsummer night it might as well stand still awhile. Suppose he were to row out? Now? and disturb the birds this hallowed night? That was not to be thought of! Should he go into the grove, then? Not there either, for the night belonged to the fairy folk. He would only linger over his wine. The gods never waste their gifts. How could he dare to wish for more than such a wine as this?

And he drank. It gave him of its sweetness, it warmed his blood, and fulfilled his heart's desire. . . . Yes, of course, it was his ancient mother who gave him this new power—she, the immortally strong one who mixes blood in the grape and fills it with her strength. What a scent of wood and wild flowers and sea streamed in through the window! How dream-like the quiet was! One could not go out and mar the peace, and where should he go? Was not this the safe retreat he had sought, where

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he could leave life behind? Yes, he would freely confess that he had dared to love young Fru Inger, and he had thought he would come out of it as easily as he had done several times before! But since that evening on the deck, when he had realised what a pure white swan she was, and for the first time understood that it could be brutal to tell a woman that he loved her—since that evening he had been another man. It seemed to him as if this fine, ardent womanhood had burnt him with its pure flame, and he had lost his courage with women, he had become shy. . . . For a woman's love, such as he had seen it, when she showed it to him, full of soul, white as snow, burning, glorious—he would never be worthy of; it had always flown past him, like a butterfly beyond his reach.

People said of him that he was both a woman-hater and a woman-lover, for there was something strange in his way towards women. He had to be satisfied with what he had got. . . . It was not true that he had found his sure retreat; it was Mina Yoñs only who had found a home here. She sat in her chair and filled it, as if it were out of the question that she should get up from it again! Could he help that?



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It was she herself who had wished it; why could he not be left in peace?

He raised the golden wine up to the light. Round the well-shaped, somewhat weak mouth there hovered an expression of feverish desire, of melancholy, morbid yearning, and the deep, tired eyes became suddenly keen and bright.

How regal she was, the young mistress of Haero! How proud and tall! how pure and glorious! As pure and clear as the golden wine with the light on it!

What was she doing here among all these insignificant people, who could not forgive her for the sublimity of her soul? How he loved the glittering scorn of her eyes, the fine contempt of her mouth, the poise of her head—and that greatness of heart which found room for all! She belonged to the grand nobility of nature—the only legitimate one—and nature had seen to it that such a noble shoot had not been lessened or destroyed!

Twilight fell on the room; the sombre green light hovered about. Outside, the grove sank into dreams, and a sharp, pungent air poured in. It spoke with a thousand voices, and the blood surged heavily in his veins. Then courage yielded—and he cast aside the thought of his mother.

He moved so that he could not see the

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corner where her portrait was hanging over the box with the A B C book. To cool oneself—in cool, pure roses!

He was sitting with a strained look on his face. Why did she not come here, or why did she come? How excellent a thing it is not to know oneself! One gets the most pleasant surprises!

Of course he was a sincere, truth-loving person, who felt hurt by the fact that it had pleased the Almighty to make somebody called Svein Torgersen! And he disliked very much his being placed here at Haero, to be always on the spot like this. It had given him a bad temper. The day Svein was to come he felt so annoyed that he had not been able to do anything.

Then it happened the following day that those two came and called on him; then he felt indescribably elated—he positively enjoyed himself. He discovered that it was a real happiness for him that Svein Torgersen existed!

Dear me, if one knew oneself then such enjoyment would not be possible! But he failed to see that there could be anything specially pleasant in being Torgersen's wife. Why should he marry such a woman? Did he possess the power that could bend such a

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heart? Then as she stood before him in her slender tallness, with the quiet, space-demanding look on her queen-like face, she actually emitted a radiance. Who could ever dare to call her Fru Torgersen? That would be ridiculous!

He emptied his glass, and filled it afresh; he wanted to strengthen himself with this golden drink. He would make the house meet for her when she should come again; raise the ceiling—it was too low here! All that would shut out the free, pure air must be removed. All that would hinder—all—must go. . . .

But the broad, strong-willed forehead—what man in the world could satisfy such a woman? She was always so dreadfully energetic—that was the only fault he had to find. It was a terrible fault too. He could never understand why women had this horrible passion for work.

He rose, somewhat unsteady; the window must be shut; he could not stand all this talk!—for the night air whispered to him and forced its way with noiseless wings. It was the spirit of the grove that spoke, earnestly, pleadingly. He declined the honour of its acquaintance, and he did not care to sacrifice his wine—not even if *she* were standing

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there with her look *de l'impératrice*! She could be terrible though; when she stood like that her smile could express such utter contempt. He did not want to see her again. When she came she brought with her a suggestion of God's high heavens that was out of place here; he did not like it; it disturbed the quiet of his rooms. He did not, on the whole, like people with this passion for righteousness; it savoured of the nursery and of fairy-books to measure by such high standards. All the same it was his pride that she was so unique that she could not be counted under any category. But she was so unbending; she had no patience with people who lost courage. "Remove mountains! Yes, perhaps," she had said, "but at any rate I can't endure it!" And she had said it with her little energetic movement of the mouth.

Those only might dare to lose courage whom she visited with her anger, or rather with that look of deep sympathy that was enough to pull people out of the abyss! Happily there were other resources.

He lifted his glass with a softened look :

"Fruit of the glorious, golden vine,  
A friend most true art thou ;  
Pale death is made no foe of mine——"

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This was all he remembered. He smiled and sipped the wine. Who was it with him in the room? He leaned back in the chair. "Who are you? The sun and shade of nature live in your eyes; you are a child of the wave and the longshore; the spirit of the sea is in you, and when you laugh, Gunvor of Haero, then the world is heavenly fair! But your forehead demands what is impossible!" Thus he mused. What sweet, soft voices filled the air! But he was out of tune with all this joy. From the grove still floated the faint music.

He drew himself up. No, he did not like this; he apostrophised Edmund Falck's complicated organisation. What did it all mean?

The brain could remember nothing, but the nerves could. They knew that somewhere within lurked a wound that was capable of re-opening, and this was enough.

Nonsense, there was no question of that! The mouth opened in ecstasy, the head sank back . . . A priestess she was, of the land of happiness. In her temple there was peace. As she stood there, the light from the sanctuary lamp streamed down on her hair, and from her body there radiated gracious sounds. She lifted her head and gave men courage again. Then to himself he spoke:

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“What is it I have heard about a certain rose? Ah yes! When it is growing it has a soft invisible veil over its petals. But the lightest touch destroys the veil. You cannot see what is missing, but you know that something has gone, for the flower pines away. It dies! I ask what this means, and am told 'tis love. Do we not read in the Song of Solomon: ‘I charge you, ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please.’”

This was what he had done; the nerves remembered it. He had torn the petals of a rose, killed a snow-white butterfly . . . many tyrants had been brought low; but he, whose deeds were unknown, wore a crown. He believed in the words of Syrak, whose judgments were true.

She was a princess by birth. . . . Why did she always wake up within him this wonderful, home-like feeling that sets people dreaming?—an indescribable, weary longing. . . . Was the music of the grove bringing him these thoughts? The voices still lingered. . . . What would she say if she guessed it? Nothing! She could not know it. People know nothing of each other.

A midsummer night's dream! That's what it was, of course. This gracious, hallowed

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time affected one strangely. And he had heard the cock crow! It drew a bitter cry from his old, real self: "Away with such thoughts! The man who knows that setting his heart on something only brings him pain must go back into loneliness. And yet, O God, I have never asked for happiness—only for a little rest and peace."

Outside, the ash-tree whispered; the mist drove over the meadows; day dawned on the far horizon. He watched the distant birch-trees growing golden and the shining flowers along the river-banks; there stood the white wood-nymph with bowed head. St. Olaf's light was kindled.

Slowly, irresistibly, the deep melancholy, the utter nervelessness stole over him again.

The sun poured in with morning greetings. No, he would not see it! In a sudden rage he rose up, shut the window and pulled down the blind.

It is summer weather. The little low houses along the shore gleam in the sunlight. On the hills are spread out the drying cod-fish; the sheds are full, and outside they are boiling the cod-liver oil. The rank, sickening smell hangs about, mixes itself with the peat smoke and seaweed, and pushes up between

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the houses until the land breeze comes and drives it out to sea.

The sea lies quiet until later on in the day, when the sea breeze comes in and meets the south-east wind in the strait. There a struggle begins which stirs up the near-shore waves and forces high the waters farther out. If Torgersen were at home at this time he always liked to go out in the six-pair boat.

Sometimes people came to fetch him when he was out on the water, and, if Gunvor were not in the boat, it was not easy to get him ashore again, for he could never see that anybody was waving. This last week, when Gunvor had been very much occupied, he had begun taking Irmild with him. She was always ready to go, and she was useful at the helm, fastening the boat and putting sheet and halyard in order; and then it was nice, too, having somebody to hold the fore-sail.

But Gunvor was always anxious when she saw them go out together; they were so careless, both of them. She did not like Svein hauling home the sheets at each turning, while Irmild sat at the helm.

One day they had gone off without ballast and with full sails, though the weather was uncertain. Near land it was calm, but over



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the Channel there shone a light which promised bad weather, and after a while the boat was rocking in the waves.

Gunvor went out after them and caught them up just as a gust of wind filled the sails. She managed to get their boat under control, but not before they were ankle-deep in water. The two, however, were quite undismayed. Torgersen was not sure that they might not have righted themselves; but, all the same, he had to promise not to do it again until he was perfectly sure of being able to manage the sails. This would not take long to learn, for he was out a good deal now. An epidemic had broken out in one of the fishing villages, and, besides this, there were other people too that wanted him.

Though he had made up his mind to make a lot of money he didn't like working for it. He expected to earn money and at the same time enjoy himself. So far he had not found the leisure that he had imagined would follow when his student days were over. He was determined to make use of the few chances of enjoyment he had.

There was such splendid salmon fishing here at Haero. Could no one understand that he had to watch for his opportunity?

That was the worst thing about Gunvor.

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She did not realise what a pity it was to let the fish wait when it was such good weather for fishing. The sick people he could always get hold of afterwards.

One day he had made his patients wait a couple of hours, while he was lying down on the shore with Irmild and Little Gunn.

Afterwards, when they were taking their evening walk and Gunvor was talking of this, it was impossible for him to make her understand that such things happen naturally, that it was the instinct of self-preservation, that there was no harm in it—his conscience was in the most excellent order.

“Come, let us sit down,” he said. He lay down in front of her and looked up into her face. “Gunvor, what a woman you are! It is as I say, you are like the stern Flavia Publicia when you are not Isis, for then you are still worse. Listen!” He drew himself higher up on the slope and leaned towards her. “Listen!” He gazed up into her face so that his smiling blue eyes could look into hers. “You say that I don’t keep my promises. . . . Can’t you understand that it is your own fault? . . . Yes, your terrible thoroughness, Gunvor. One always finds you yourself behind your words. You can’t understand that

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others have no time for such things. I am, in fact, almost afraid of your words; there is something so dreadfully strenuous in them. It is as if you had already done it when you say a thing. *Je n'aime pas ça, moi.* Good Lord, one must have time to turn!"

She looked at him a moment without answering. "As for you, Svein, you always mean something different from what you say."

It was as if it relieved her to take it in that way.

"But why don't you ever read, Svein? You don't even cut the pages of your magazines! And that disease you had begun to study? I don't think you should . . ." She looked down at him.

His light moustaches moved; he was laughing. Then he rose.

"Dear, long-faced Gunvor! Do laugh a little! Such a terrible Jewish seriousness does not become you. Everybody should agree that the best thing is to make life comfortable. And, dear, when the health of the district on the whole can be characterised as excellent, I think people might be content and leave the doctor in peace! Yes, I say it again, I have no lack of

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energy, but I look at both sides of the question; now the bird-cherry is blooming and the salmon-trout rising for the fly. Are you coming with us to-morrow?"

She looked at him, but said nothing. He drew her to him. He tried to prove that she caught on trifles. She wanted so very much to believe him, and she closed her eyes. Her young, strong nature would now at last love and be happy.

A little while afterwards they were laughing and joking. Torgersen told her about his experience with ladies, and happened to speak of Irmild; she was not so plain after all. Gunvor had asked him to give her a course of medical treatment, and now he would do it, for she was too thin; he would give her some pills, and try if he could not get her to put on some flesh. "For," he said, "you know, I think ladies may be too thin! You yourself despise women who are too small in the waist; isn't it you who says it denotes a lack of culture?"

Gunvor laughed. "No, that's the judge!" she said.

And he went on: "Women are strange beings! Irmild always does the opposite of what she says, and Fru Jeannette's conclusions you know already: 'Because Fru

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Hammer doesn't look well in her black velvet gown, I propose that Theodor be appointed Professor!"

Gunvor touched him playfully on the cheek with her glove. "And then there is Svein Torgersen; I don't know what you think of him!" she said, laughing, for now all uneasiness had passed.

The sea was calm.

Torgersen had not been at Haero long before he became well known in the isles and on the adjacent mainland. Of course, it was true that he was too indifferent, but his open character and imperturbable good temper won him friends everywhere. And withal a follower of the new school of thought in politics, he was welcomed with pleasure in the drawing-room of the lady who represented the social side of the Conservative party in that district—the equerry's widow—though he did not encourage her in fussing over her trifling indispositions.

In spite of the fact that he soon became the leader of the Liberal party there, he was friendly with the reserved, stiff and irritable judge, who was the foremost man among the Conservatives.

It was said that he had been able to convince the judge that salmon-fishing was one

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of the joys of life, and he could do what nobody else could—get the judge out in rainy weather. In pouring rain people would see them wandering together along the banks of the river. Torgersen, who was known for his skill in throwing the line, gave him good instruction.

Sometimes Gunvor went with them. It amused her to hear him speak with so much eagerness about the importance of the flexibility of the rod and the weight of the line, while he tried to explain to her the right vibration at the end of the rod that made the fly dance on the water.

And when he began telling his stories of the craftiness of the salmon, of course it amused her too, but she couldn't help making some comparisons; the interest he showed in fishing did not stand in the most desirable proportion to that with which he pursued his studies and his daily work.

When they went together to see a sick person in one of the little cottages where life was at its hardest, he always hurried away as soon as possible. She could not make him interested in the life of the people, and he laughed at her for taking it so seriously. Would she punish him for loving only her and not having the same

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wonderful sympathy for people with whom there was always something the matter?

As far as that went, he would with pleasure give them anything they wanted to make them more comfortable, but there was a limit. . . . Gunvor was not content with these promises. It was true he *did* give away a good deal, but quite indiscriminately.

He had given the young men at the stores a couple of Tanagra figures that he had had from his friend Lorenzo, and Boot Tobine had been given his mother's hymn-book. It was a mania with him to give presents, a purely mechanical necessity to relieve himself of something. It eased him, as if he had got rid of some obligation.

By nature he was good-tempered and easily moved, and people agreed that when he gave himself time to think he was very good-hearted. There was one thing about his way of giving presents—people did not need either to thank him or to account for them afterwards, for the next moment he had forgotten all about it. At the same time he was horribly ungrateful himself. He would accept the greatest sacrifice without thinking at all of the cost to the person who had made it. He had got into the

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habit, especially in later years, of taking things easily and going through life without burdens, and he throve on these principles.

Summer was passing, with clear days and nights, and the sea lay calm and quiet.

But to Gunvor there came moments, when the great harmony outside did not accord with the state of her own mind. She was not able to reason away the thought that Svein Torgersen was not the man she had imagined him to be. It was as if something were developing in his nature that made the distance between them greater than before. It was something contracted during the years he had lived so far from her, that had taken hold of him and passed into his blood, rendering him in some respects a stranger to her. There was not the same joy in the intimacy as before.

When she sought in him that sympathy of soul for which she had been longing all her life, it came upon her as a painful surprise that it did not exist, any more than did the calmness and peace that she had never doubted she would find in love.

But he loved her; would not the rest follow? He tried to convince her that her scruples were accounted for by the fact that she had not kept abreast with the times; it



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was old-fashioned to make such claims upon oneself and upon everybody else. Why should not one enjoy the discovery that man ought not to worry himself?

He did not know anything so unpractical as Gunvor's extreme sympathy with people. How could one help the fact that God had made life hard? Would it fill the black abyss of human need, if they, too, threw themselves into it? The point was to keep within reasonable limits and to understand that however much one loved the universe, one must be content with ministering to the part of it that belonged to oneself personally. She must at least not demand anything else from the capacities of Svein Torgersen.

In his opinion a person's grandest qualities could be so overpowering that they became faults, and those just the worst ones. The difficulty was to make Gunvor understand this.

When they were sitting talking together like that, Gunvor sometimes could not hold out any longer. She would turn to him and say with devotion in her voice: "Don't say any more! Only tell me that you love me as I am!"

All the time she had a feeling that her mother was watching them, not quite sure that the promise would be kept.

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Aunt Vikka began to see the result of her influence on her pupil. But, like everything with Irmild, it came so unexpectedly that it kept Aunt Vikka in a state of surprise for several days, for all at once she became excessively industrious. Though it was in the holidays, she embroidered collars for Fru Elin and a nightcap for auntie, and she had asked permission to keep the office tidy. Gunvor had to admit that she had never seen it look so nice as it did now, decorated with greenery and flowers, and free of dust.

Gunvor rejoiced with Aunt Vikka over the sudden reformation. Fru Elin said nothing, but she looked suspiciously at the child—one did not even know exactly how old she was.

She said herself once that she had passed her eighteenth year, but nobody would have thought that to see her. Torgersen's opinion was that she had not been properly fed before she came to Haero; he meant to make a fully-developed woman of her soon, and he himself looked to it that his prescriptions were followed. Besides, he had begun to look at her a little more closely.

She was a strange-looking girl. He could not free himself from the impression that

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there was a certain weirdness in this graceful attenuation, this restless, exciting charm of figure. There was something irresistibly attractive in the curve of her neck and something at the same time soft and strong in her hands, suggesting a hidden power.

The slight frame seemed to hold a spirit whose nature none could curb with reason. There was nothing objectionable in this; on the contrary, there was a certain charm in it; she had just the air of a *bohémien*; it really was odd. . . . Had one ever seen a human being with such movements of the head, such small, quick eyes that gleamed, so to speak, with all the shimmering colours of the water in them. What interested him, purely physiologically, was the vegetative lack of strength in those lean muscles; this form of weakness is more often found among the full-bodied. The melancholy, longing expression round her mouth also interested him. He had come to the conclusion that the girl was worth studying, at any rate physiologically.

One evening Falck came up to take them fishing. It was at the end of August, and just the right weather for catching salmon-trout.

Torgersen thought the plan excellent. He

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had just come back from a visit to a patient and was making pills, in the leisurely, comfortable way usual with him. He put aside his work at once and came in, fully prepared for the expedition, just as the judge had sat down and Aunt Vikka was preparing the coffee-table.

Fru Elin looked at him with silent criticism—he was not so alert when he was to go out to the sick. But nothing was said.

Gunvor then came in. She turned to her mother and asked: "Can we take Irmild with us?"

Fru Elin nodded: "Just as you like! She is in the garden watering."

Torgersen went out for her.

She was no longer watering. She had lain down on the grass, and there she was, rolled up like a ball. When he called her she moved a little and turned her face slowly towards him. He did not see her eyes, but he noticed a furtive restlessness in the eyelids, which were of a delicate, wax-like transparency.

He went forward and helped her up with both hands. He looked at her. Why, she had nothing on but a thin, damp cotton dress, clinging tightly to the young body that was already assuming fuller curves.

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"You must put on something," he said, looking up.

He met her glance; there was a quick fiery light in it.

Gunvor now came upon the scene. "How you have lingered! Now go in and dress properly. You know I don't like you to go about like that," she added shortly.

Irmild had taken hold of the watering-pot again and was looking rather awkward. "Yes, but I don't know if I have time. Still I may as well go too," she finished with a sudden firmness.

Torgersen laughed and asked her to make haste, and, half-an-hour later, they were on their way up through the little glen near the river.

On the ridge above they heard the black-cock's call; that meant a change in the weather.

Falck was silent, Gunvor did not say much either, but Torgersen talked continually.

First he took Irmild under his wing; but Irmild was not in a docile mood. Then they came to a witch's cauldron filled with still water, and a bright streak shot out from it—the flying salmon-trout.

"You see, I must give up the attempt,"

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he said at last gaily. "Patience is not my strong point."

Besides, he had lots of things to talk about with Falck to-day. There was so much in the newspapers just now. He was very much interested in the projected engineering scheme for regulating the waters of the Nile with the help of a reservoir. To regulate the whole system of nature would be a desirable thing to do. After all, man had not gone far in making the earth subject unto him.

Then he wanted to know with what feelings Falck regarded his ancestress—for at last they seemed to have found in the red-haired Proantropos the missing link between beast and man. He considered that in our time, when the practice of universal commemoration was so general, something ought to be done to signalise such an important conclusion.

How did Falck like Stirner? It was really excellent to have got a new word for egoism; on the whole, it was only a question of new names. He went on to say that he had met the rector that day. They had been talking of the Christian doctrine of redemption and of the Mohammedans. The rector had condemned the latter, because they could not understand the nature of sin.

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"This ignorance seems to me to prove that their position is a strong one," said Torgersen.

He remarked *à propos* of Buddhists that he was glad they had built their new temple in Paris and not up here with Gunvor as priestess.

Gunvor laughed. "You turn towards all the points of the compass to-night; we shall certainly have a change in the weather!" she said.

They had now reached the water, and the fishing began. There were plenty of fish rising, and good sport followed.

Irmild was keenly delighted as she landed fish after fish. Torgersen looked indulgently at her. Gunvor, after she had caught a few small trout, put away her rod, took off her hat and seated herself comfortably at the edge of the water.

Her example was soon followed by Falck, who came and sat down by her. "I also will enjoy a rest in the bosom of nature," he said.

She nodded to him, smiling, and he looked into her quiet, expressive face: "And now I'll begin talking: it is my turn; you will never take yours!"

She laughed. "You are a poor prophet," he went on; "I have everything to talk of—it is so long since the last time."

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What did he mean by the last time ?

She leant back, smiling in the spontaneous manner that was so characteristic of her open nature.

She did not even listen to all he said, and why should she, when it was so delightful not to ? . . . What a calm, wonderfully mysterious pleasure the mere sound of his voice gave her ! She wondered if anything had affected him deeply to-day. Why did his voice sink into those deep accents ? Why did they always pain her ?

“Do you think I should cast off my Conservatism ?” he asked.

She was sitting plucking at the blades of grass, and looked up amazed.

“Yes,” he went on, “then we should agree better, the doctor and I ; and it was what you wanted, wasn’t it ? As for trying to agree with *you*, you know yourself that that would be impossible ! You live in another age from ours. One can’t label you as member of any party ; your fiancé thinks that you belong to his, but he is mistaken ! I have suspected you of unfathomable Radicalism, but not of one kind only ; your Radicalism is of all colours and has no programme ; it does not aim at one thing only, but at everything ! It would fill all the little,



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ordinary people with horror if they could guess its extent."

Again she looked at him with a surprised smile. "Now, I have not said anything for a long time, as far as I know!" she said.

"You don't want to speak: you talk best when you are silent. What have you been saying now, for instance, while you have been sitting there silent? You require us, as a matter of course, to be human beings! What belongs to a far-off golden age, this you expect to find in us as innate fundamental principles. You exact that our motives shall be pure, not only with regard to great things, but in the veriest details! And you yourself behave as if you had no idea of the terrible consciousness of sin that prevents one from attaining perfection."

His tone was impatient, almost reproachful.

She wondered why he had wanted to take them out with him when he was in such a mood. She looked thoughtfully in front of her, and a slow blush rose to her face.

Had he heard what people said of him? Did he think that she also . . . Had she ever said anything that could have hurt him?

She rose with a sudden, involuntary movement. "Yes," she said despondingly, "I also have this consciousness of sin."

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“You? Nonsense! You are so elemental that you might be the daughter of the great earth at first hand, without all these intermediate links of sin-burdened generations from whom we inherit such a consciousness. What have you on your conscience, if I may ask?”

She did not like the tone of levity with which he said this, for up to now he had obviously been in earnest: there was something that had hurt him.

She again looked thoughtfully in front of her.

“Oh, I am often troubled with the thought that there is so much suffering I can never hope to alleviate. The least I can do, you see, is to take care that I do not add to others’ burdens. It seems to me that this is the only way of keeping one’s hands clean.”

She was speaking half-turned from him. There was a violent depth of feeling in the low, vibrating voice and something of a prayer, that made his heart warm. Henceforth his old joys would be as nothing to him. No, indeed.

He liked to see her in this state of suppressed agitation. It was almost with a sense of joy that he discovered, that in this calm,

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controlled nature there were depths wherein perhaps lurked a fire which would one day blaze into open flame.

She began once more to pluck at the grass; then she turned to him with a smile: "Don't you know we are out here to amuse ourselves? Now you must talk of something else!"

How clear and piercing his eyes were, she thought.

They stood on the dry, mossy hillside together, watching the sunset.

Then Falck began: "Listen to the whispers from the forest; they are the same as those from the sea. It is just as if the monks were chanting their office—the earth is Roman Catholic, I tell you! When St. Francis sings his canticle all creation joins with him: 'Praise be unto Thee, O Lord, for the sun and the sea, for the wind and all kinds of weather, but most of all for death, which passes none by.' Now come and sit down."

For she was still standing, looking into the distance. Her eyes were full of an inner light; they were set—not in a face, but in a soul.

He suddenly became jealous of everything she cared for in all the world.

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"Come and sit down," he said again impatiently. "Won't you sit down at all?"

She smiled and obeyed. Why, she wondered, did he ask them out with him when he was feeling so disagreeable?

Down at the water's edge stood Torgersen and Irmild. They had been fishing together very peacefully for some time, but now Torgersen was finding fault; nothing could beat a woman for spoiling sport, he was saying.

Falck followed them with his eyes; then he turned to Gunvor with a strange expression: "You are not very sharp-sighted!" he said quietly, in a regretful tone.

She smiled in an absent way. She did not know what he meant.

"Our cases are somewhat the same," he added; "we both lost our mothers when we were very young. Doesn't that explain everything?"

At this point the others came up to them. Torgersen was in an excellent humour and lay down at Gunvor's feet. She began unpacking the provision-basket.

Irmild eagerly laid the cloth on the green moss, and Torgersen promised that everything should be done justice to. "Ah! this is nice," he said. "Let us have a glass of

## The Heart of the Northern Sea

wine! Drink with me, Gunn. Let us enjoy the goods the gods provide us. I hope you are not hankering after higher ideals!"

She touched his glass with hers, smiling her reply.

"What has the judge been expounding to you with so much earnestness?" he went on; "I insist on hearing all about it!"

"I can't tell you," was her reply; "I wasn't listening very carefully."

Falck's eyes met hers for a moment in a keen, penetrating glance, as if he wanted to read her thoughts, but the next moment he had relapsed into moody indifference.

She regretted what she had said—it was at the same time true and yet not true. It was almost a relief to her when a message was brought to them that there was a boat waiting for the doctor.

Torgersen, however, was not pleased.

"What a desperate hurry you are in, Gunn! I always have been hustled by Fate, and now you're my fate, I suppose! You've no idea what an awful nuisance it is to be a doctor, when one has to tear oneself away from everything enjoyable. Now, for instance, we were just going to regale ourselves for a little and forget this vale of tears, and I must go. Give me

## Midsummer Night

another glass of wine; it is sweet as a kiss, says my friend Solomon. Let me have both!"

But Gunvor had already packed the wine.

"Come now, Svein," she said entreatingly, "didn't you hear that the old woman was very ill? Let us go in the man's boat, then you will get there more quickly."

On the way home they did not say much. Gunvor sat silent and thoughtful, watching the little ripples on the water.

Irmild wanted to row, and she took the other pair of oars, but they were too heavy for her. Torgersen came and took one of them; he wanted to see if it was possible to keep time with anything so extremely erratic as Irmild Myrland.

Gunvor turned to Falck, who was sitting fingering his rod. "I did not mean what you think," she said softly.

He looked up at her. She flushed. It seemed as if he had forgotten what she meant.

As the boat swung by the point near the salting-house they heard someone singing to the twang of a guitar. It was a child's hand that touched the strings, and below Boot Tobine's shrill soprano a childish alto could be heard.

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Gunvor looked up suddenly. "Oh, it is Little Gunn," she said. "They found the guitar in the lumber-room, and now they are singing night and day!"

"And always that disgusting fisherman's song," said Torgersen. "It is sickening—with its wrecks and corpses!"

Falck moved a little nearer to Gunvor: "It is your guitar! Don't you sing any longer?"

Gunvor shook her head. "Something happened at home one night," she said slowly, after a pause; "it was when I was quite a child. The next morning I carried the guitar up into the garret; I felt I could never sing any more. Of course, it was an idea," she said, "but yet there was something in it. I have not sung since then!"

There was a heavy, depressed atmosphere. It was, as Torgersen said, just as if something had happened.

"There is thunder in the air," said Falck.

And Irmild knew that when there is thunder in August, it may make the moon suck blood and give one fever. No one answered. The boat brought them to land. With an abrupt "Thank you," and "Good-bye," Falck walked away.

## Midsummer Night

He would not see her smiling to that doctor. How readily and gaily she had taken his arm! She might be quite right! Surely, he had not had any hopes! How blind and loving her eyes were!



## CHAPTER IV

### THE STORM GATHERS

THE holidays were at an end. Irmild had again begun to study with Froken Vind. Next year she was to go in for her examination, and Aunt Vikka had already begun to get exam. fever.

But Irmild herself took the matter with alarming indifference. Her sudden eagerness and diligence were of short duration.

Towards autumn Auntie's troubles grew worse. The child was a changed being; it seemed as if she had lost the power to work.

"She cannot be well," said Gunvor. "We must let her alone for a little while."

And Torgersen agreed with her. "Let her amuse herself, that's what she wants. Good Lord, one has to work soon enough!"

It was true, she was an odd girl. He first began to get interested in her as her doctor, and as he knew her better he felt that she needed a little care and protection.

But still he had not entirely lost the sense of antipathy he had felt for her to begin with. When she entered the room in her

## The Storm Gathers

strange gliding way he would feel a physical discomfort; sometimes he could not stand her looking at him. He had once met one of these furtive, searching glances. There had been something in the opalescent lustre of her eyes that had made him think of a half-sleeping beast of prey which he had approached too near. "She can be really repulsive," he would say to Gunvor; "but you can't understand it, for when she looks at you there is nothing but adoration in her eyes. She adores you as a heathen does his fetish!"

Yet it interested him to notice she was not the same to him as to others, and he liked studying her changeful face.

The strange lines round the mouth, the small, quick eyes that would kindle up like a flame one moment and stare coldly and inexpressively in front of them the next, all the suddenly varying expressions that flitted across her face—these made him curious. And then she was composed of the strangest contrasts; by turns fearlessly bold and faint-hearted, even to cowardice, eagerly interested and apathetically indifferent; she was altogether elusive. There began to be something attractive in it, something that kept him thinking of her.

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Meanwhile, Aunt Vikka wept over Irmild's indifference, and prayed God to cure her—since Torgersen did not seem to be able to do it.

He had answered very curtly once when she asked him about it, and since then she had gone to the Lord.

But when Aunt Vikka spoke of her apathy, Torgersen laughed; he had lately formed a new opinion about her, after a chance meeting with her in the garden.

She was supposed to be studying German, but instead she was, as usual, sitting pulling up grass or plucking leaves from the rose-bush; she had scratched her fingers till they bled, but she could not keep them quiet.

He happened again to notice her movements—the stealthy, slow flexibility with which she changed position every moment. Then he said he would help her with her German, and he again met her strange, veiled glance. He made her talk a little, and laugh.

Meanwhile, he was looking at her.

Her heavy plait had become untwisted, and her hair floated in waves about her. He could not help thinking of the sea again, for there were mysterious depths as of sea-water in these eyes, and about the mouth there

## The Storm Gathers

was a restlessness, violent and painful, that perpetually came and went with an infinite, melancholy iteration.

He lingered, chatted with her, and studied her. Suddenly he thought that he saw in her soul something the others could not understand.

She seemed to him like a young animal overcome, not by listlessness, but by the luxuriance of her awakening senses; he at once understood the cause of her thinness and apparent apathy: all development of power, all material was prematurely consumed by the overwhelming force of the half-unconscious life of instincts that was fast ripening within her. She was like an animal or a plant that for the first time feels the power of its nature stirring within it. She spoke a few words in a voice that sounded to him like the enticing call of a bird. And he noted her smile, and the long, nervous hands, and the restless glances from under the drooping eyelids. These signs at the same time annoyed him and filled him with an irresistible tenderness for her.

In the evening there were guests. After supper Irmild made old Froken Vind play Oesten's *Alpenlieder*, her favourite pieces. She sat down in her little corner by the fireplace

## The Heart of the Northern Sea

and cried; she fancied the music gave expression to all she did not understand.

From that day Svein Torgersen was more interested in Irmild than in any of his other patients. Here was an excellent opportunity of studying a phase of human nature elemental as in the animal or in the plant.

Irmild was to him quite a new phenomenon. He was attracted by this energetic, naturally powerful will, which sometimes flashed suddenly into sight as freely as a sunbeam.

He was, to tell the truth, not used to looking at these things in this way. But here there was something that filled him with veneration. There was an earnestness, a depth, which struck him with astonishment.

The young, uncurbed will asserted itself and claimed its desire with the same proud right as the lilies of the field! Just for this reason there was something naturally fresh and attractive in it, and he could not help making some comparisons. He knew a little about these matters in connection with men; for himself they were, on the whole, moods that came and went, the chance offspring of thoughtless moments, that passed, leaving no traces behind; but in this case there was soul at the bottom of it, a compelling power.

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He felt that she dimly recognised the legitimacy of, and the great power contained in, those feelings, and he was interested. But, taking all kinds of natures into consideration, he, for his part, preferred Gunvor. He quite liked to go from one to the other of the two—Gunvor and Irmild—entire contrasts though they were. He liked to have a little excitement occasionally. Yet there were times when he felt an irresistible impulse to adore Gunvor's noble tranquillity, her loftiness of thought and soulful depth of feeling. He took the steep road of approach to Gunvor with pleasure in his steps. He even thought he had his share and lot in all this excellence. He would not for the world have things otherwise than they were.

On one of the quiet autumn evenings they were all coming home together after a little boating expedition. Irmild, to Aunt Vikka's surprise, had been by turns noisily gay and entirely silent. She was playing with her hand in the dark water that glistened silvery white as it left the oar.

Torgersen could not help looking at her. The long, supple fingers seemed to be writing in the water, drawing glittering rings, sprinkling the shining spots of phosphorus over the oar and lighting up the calm sea.

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What was the meaning of those glittering eyes?

They were themselves like the phosphorescent water, full of the inconstancy of life. It was refreshing to bend forward and catch Gunvor's calm, smiling glance.

But afterwards, when they had come home and Irmild had gone out into the garden, though it was dark, why did he follow her? Which of them was it really that said the first whispered words? And why had she caught her dress in the hazel thicket, so that he had to help her to get free? How could he account for the fact that he happened to kiss her? God knew, he had never contemplated such an act! . . . But there was a mute complaint in her eyes, and the expression of her mouth was so pathetic. He had been obliged to yield.

From that moment he began to understand himself, and to feel that this matter might trouble him. When she came near him it affected him in a particular way; instead of an overwhelming superiority he felt a sensation of feebleness. She seemed to bind his senses and absorb his will. A vague fear took possession of him when she came gliding in—it was impossible to escape her; he could no longer answer for himself. . . . For her

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small, dark eyes . . . There were moments when he could not endure their glance. He felt vaguely that there was a human being in himself that stretched out arms for her. And against his will too! Why ever should it be he? Somebody it must be—he could understand that—but why *he*, who was so content with his present lot? And he resolved that it should *not* happen.

It was a warm September day. Irmild was sitting on the lawn. She was supposed to be reading, but she was doing nothing of the kind. She was lying in her favourite position, plucking at the grass. In front of her were her books, and on the top of them a small note-book, in which she had been scribbling down something in pencil. For she was keeping a diary—all fashionable ladies did. Why should she be behind the curate's wife? She had once happened to come across something out of her's; wasn't this as good?

She took the book, held it up in front of her, and read in a slow, melancholy voice: "Life . . . what a strange word! Longing, disquiet, summer! Oh, if one could only express it! Oh, all the deadly yearning for happiness that burns within! Calm peace, no thought of self! What true joy! Oh,





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I must weep at the thought of it! Fair days that take me in their arms and fill me with joy! I do not deserve God's goodness! Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace. . . . God and Christ! Gunvor Thorsdatter of Haero! What would I not do for them! . . . Sacrifice myself! It would be happiness to die when she looks at me with her deep angel's eyes! Oh, are there no faithful friends? Why should I always throw away my burning devotion, and be cast off after having once looked into her soul? Fancy, if she should guess my love: but I hope she will see nothing. . . . Oh, if some spirit of the water could rise up—some sea-goblin sent by heaven appear to marry me to my beloved! Then should the green-clad mermaids grace my nuptials, a whirlwind should arise to fill the organ pipes for music, and the serpent of the sea should play upon them. The sea should rise to glorious heights, and give up all its denizens to me! . . . All the dark forms of terror should rise up in one long, horrid row. There would be seen those awesome figures with eyes set in their backs; those, too, with eyes that shoot red glances of light which yet are grimly cold; and, further on, the man-devouring serpents which capsize the boats.

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How still these grim, black-shrouded forms would stand. . . . Oh God, I love him so! And he has been away three days, and I in deep despair! Good Lord, something must happen!"

She dropped the book, pale and excited. She shivered. Yes, when she thought of him she was cold. She threw herself down on her side and lay with closed eyes, laughing. Suddenly she rose, sighing. There were tears in her eyes as she folded her hands: "Our Father"—no, this was better: "O Holy Spirit, teach us faith,"—it always did her good.

She had fits of God-fearing fervour; both to-day and yesterday she had almost incessantly prayed to God. She lay down on the grass quietly again. To-night he was to come!

That she could have helped loving him was not possible, so wonderfully attractive as he was to a woman, as Serianna had said! But it was never well for a woman to run after men, she had added. . . . What did Serianna know about this? No, she was not right; it was always well. . . . "What God has united, man is not to put asunder," were the words of Serianna. What did she know about it? . . . But Gunvor, what would

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she say? She for whom Irmild was willing to die! Oh, how terribly unhappy she was! She felt an unquenchable thirst, the blood throbbed in her veins, her head was a furnace; everything scorched her, books and all. She longed to throw herself in the cool sea.

She started up. "Yes, I am coming!" she cried impatiently.

Oh, if people did not grow so old! Then she would, at least, not be troubled by Aunt Vikka.

Towards midnight Torgersen came home from a journey to some fishing-places at a distance. It had been raining a good deal in the evening; a white, fleecy, light fog was lying over sea and land, and from the veiled moon there came a deathly shimmer.

He hurried up from the shore, tired, wet and hungry. He knew that Gunvor always saw that there was a fire on the hearth in his room, and that he got some hot food. But when he came in, he drew back as if burnt.

By the flickering light he saw somebody sitting near the hearth.

It was not Gunvor. He knew that she was spending the night with Fru Thymann, who was ill with typhoid fever.



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He stepped nearer. It was Irmild.

He drew in his shirt-cuff impatiently and swore under his breath—for he had made up his mind. She was sitting gazing into the fire, crouched in her usual way. When she rose, it occurred to him, that she had a way of arching her back like a wave that curves before it rushes on.

He half turned away from her, listening. It seemed to him that there was a sound in the darkness as from a deep, foaming whirlpool—no, it was his own blood; he turned dizzy from mere exhaustion.

He took a step up to her. “Why are you sitting here?” he asked unwillingly.

With a quick movement she was close beside him. Her eyes were calm and gloomy, but her face was as if transparent.

A shudder passed over him; a living, burning force went from her to him, an electric current, that led the passionate warmth of her young, fresh senses over into his blood. He felt that he wanted to put his foot on her neck, but yet at the same time he experienced a thrill of infinite pleasure in the feeling that she was his master and reigned over him as a sovereign over his realm.

He looked at her mouth and thought at this moment there was something repellent

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about it—the thin, blood-red lips were curved like a snake. He breathed short and fast; he spoke with difficulty. “Why did you come here?” he asked again.

“I had no more pills!” she said sullenly, “and then I wanted to see if the fire was burning, for it rains so, and I wanted to bring down the food, as you——” She could say no more. Her lips quivered.

He put his arm round her.

Then she buried her head on his shoulder and began to sob. “I could scarcely live!” she whispered.

The young, lithe figure dropped into his arms, her head lay heavily on his breast. “How nice and cold you are,” she whispered, and caught greedily for her breath.

“Are you ill?” he asked, altogether confounded. He let her go and felt her pulse; it was throbbing violently.

“No, no, no!” she cried, and she threw her arms round his neck and clung to him again.

He no longer hesitated; he bent down, took her in his arms, and kissed her.

His thoughts were wonderfully confused. Everything melted away into sweetness; he only knew that she was a wonder—a flower in glorious colours that had blossomed up out

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of the calm sea! She was like the south wind.

She was the south wind.

And when her red, warm mouth kissed him, he had a sense of something giving way and falling to pieces inside him. She was like a wave that came and dragged him down with her into the depths.

Time went on, with work indoors and out. The autumn gales and the winter darkness came again. The sea beat dully against the shore and chanted its dirge-like melody, or rose high in the long night, playing with life and death.

The fishermen sat in their small cottages and made nets, fervently hoping that the Lord might allay the fury of the storms before the great fishing began.

But it was not allayed. When the Sea-Father himself wreaked his vengeance on the sons of men, there were some that escaped the death prepared for them, but many fell his victims, and left behind them hearts of sorrowing kin. None had time to let their thoughts linger long on this, and it did not prevent the men from going out. To stay on shore would have been of little use, for was it not written in one's hand when life would end?

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And now there was increased activity both on sea and shore ; everyone worked hard. At Haero the business was going on very well ; in the warehouse reigned Pedersen, in the salting-house Ezekiel. There fish was bought and sold, and a fleet of boats was lying in the shallows.

Gunvor sat all the morning in the office. And there was much to do in other places also ; there was always some one wanting her. Some said she was much too severe, but others found a pleasure in coming to her. The people went to her in their moments of greatest need. They seemed to gain relief from telling their sorrows to her ; there was no one who could console them as she could ; her presence appeared to have a mystic, healing influence.

She was constantly sent for to go to somebody or other ; there were always people who found the winter too much for them. Then it was a comfort to have Gunvor of Haero to talk to. In her eyes there was a quiet confidence that gave them new hope ; her smile helped people to tide over the dark time.

There seemed to be none who were outside the pale of her sympathy. She had a fine intelligence and a quick eye. Those whom

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the world generally left unpitied and passed by as unworthy, were sought out by her and raised from indifference or degradation. Thus Gunvor Thorsdatter had much to occupy her time and thoughts. There was her mother too—the old, strong, weather-beaten tree; she wished so much that the soft winds of life might play on it a while, before it lost its leaves.

And then there was Aunt Vikka! There was one thing Gunvor loved more than life and happiness, and that was justice. She had laid it upon herself to pay Aunt Vikka a little of all life owed her. And then Little Gunn! She had vowed in her heart that the child should grow up protected from all that had made her own childhood dark. Little Gunn should not be saddened; she should not suffer for the faults of others; she should escape the experiences that had marred the happiness of her own life. Little Gunn should make sunshine for them at Haero, she should grow up a happy daughter of the family.

And Irmild—she had improved more than they had dared to hope. Gunvor was thankful to her because she had turned out so well. For in the winter she was again quiet and diligent, and she got on better



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in every way — began to develop both in body and soul. Nothing was wanting now.

“I suppose I shall soon have *you* for a patient,” Torgersen said one day, when Gunvor said she had not time to go out with him. “This won’t do! You have some wild theories which you must not be allowed to carry into practice. To take life so seriously, why, that is the worst thing to do.”

She looked at him with a faint smile. She was no longer sure that he did not mean it.

She had now a clear understanding of the distance between them, and with puzzled astonishment she began to wonder where she had him. She could no longer conceal from herself that there were other sides to his nature that showed themselves now and again, and she felt sure that the regardless lust of life that he at times evinced was the result.

But there was, of course, a great deal to be said in excuse for him. He could not be expected to be like one brought up within garden walls. All her attempts, however, to reason out matters with him were unsuccessful.

In her strict love of truth she always

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went straight to the point; he was ever ingenious in arguing that he was in the right.

Whatever she said, he was easily able to make good his objections to it: it was characteristic of her that she could not reduce her claims, and she did not understand the use of indirect means. It pained her that in consequence she *could* not but be too severe; she suffered as from a physical pain for not being able to touch matters with a lighter hand.

She would look at him in silent wonder, frowning slightly. Other people in the neighbourhood could understand her, and she could help them; it was only with Svein she was so much at a loss.

As the winter went on it grew worse. She began to notice that Svein's feeling for her was no longer the same. She felt that it was gradually losing that quality which she had loved best, and for which she had forgiven so much. And she followed it sadly with her eyes, feeling with all her senses how it had changed. She could not understand it; it filled her with agony.

She was haunted at nights by dreams that tortured her; she fancied she was with a dying child; she noticed the pulse grew

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more feeble hour by hour—and she waited for help.

In the day-time the shadow of these thoughts sometimes crept across her face. Torgersen could not bear it; he wanted to see the face he was used to, clear and bright. Then she would brush his hair aside, kiss his forehead, and smile.

“Oh, it is nothing, only a little sleeplessness,” she would say.

For she would not let him go. A promise was to her something great and grand, forever binding—something one ought never to escape from. And she loved him; she would willingly fight at his side—help him, if she could, not to be false to himself.

Spring came again at Haero. The left wing was ready. Fru Elin was obliged to give in; they were to hold their wedding in March at the latest.

But, somehow or other, Fru Elin got it put off until midsummer, as it had been arranged at first. There were people who thought that Gunvor's smile was not as before and that her forehead was not so clear, but at the same time Fru Elin had been noticeably brighter. She had a very even disposition.

Torgersen had lately had a few attacks

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of bad temper, such as they had not noticed in him before. They were the result of a kind of remorse. But he soon comforted himself again.

The gods knew he loved Gunvor—he adored her! . . . On the whole, she had nothing to reproach him with, for he was certainly a man of principle, and he had decided.

Well, the matter of Irmild was somewhat complicated, but what could be done now? He would like to know who could have defended himself against her, wild and strange as she was . . . and he wondered if Gunvor would be sensible enough to take it quietly. At first, he had thought of not mentioning anything about it to her, and letting it die with no word spoken . . . that would be best for all of them. But he had found that a full freedom in such cases was the most idealistic. . . . He had so high an opinion of Gunvor that he was sure she would understand it! For love, one could easily see, is a weak little fledgeling needing change to keep it healthy. . . . Therefore one must not make such terribly hard claims on it. What could one do? A twilight hour, a scented stillness in the room, a movement only, was enough. . . .

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It was impossible to tell whence it came, or to prevent its coming . . . and he loved Gunvor just as much as ever.

He loved her simply unspeakably. She made him a better man. When he was sitting with her he felt, with a heavenly certainty, that all was well. He quite realised how much he loved everything pure and true. On the whole, he was a good man; for, even when she put on her severest, martyr-like smile and expressed the most baffling aloofness in her manner, he bore it with extreme patience. And though women adopt a severity of tone in order to prevent opposition to their word, he knew that in this case such severity was not necessary, for he wrapped her round with love, worshipped her with awe and reverence as his proud, adorable and lovely Isis.

In the main his conscience was clear.

This winter there had been comparatively little gaiety among the social circles in that neighbourhood. To some extent this was accounted for by the state of the fishing trade; it had been unusually fluctuating. Old people said that the evils of the age had affected the once simple fish, which now became more difficult to catch and less and less worth the catching as time went on.

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But there were other reasons too. The rector's wife had been suffering from typhoid fever, and had been much enfeebled, to the great surprise of the rector, who did not get his usual attendance, and who never could imagine his wife ill.

Further, Fru Jeannette had been to Christiania for the greater part of the winter; and in some families babies had died.

But to the equerry's widow, however, it had been an exciting time. She had a talent for paying visits of condolence; it was her speciality to dress in black and go out to express her heartfelt sympathy to the afflicted ones. Certainly no one could cry so softly and quietly into a perfumed handkerchief as she could. And so, by degrees, she succeeded in establishing for herself the reputation of being the best-hearted woman in the place; the rector considered her the flower of his flock.

The rector was highly valued as a sick-bed visitor. The prayers he held at the bedside were considered very beautiful, and he himself had a high opinion of people who were touched by them. While he discoursed with eloquence on the subject of the sick and needy, it pleased him to see the tearful attention paid by his fair parishioner. Of

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course, he could not know that her heart grew cold again before she reached her house, and that her sympathetic soul found no difficulty in turning from her door unaided a poor man begging bread.

Her idea of doing good was limited to visiting persons who were so well off that they could receive her adequately.

But she was also doing good on a large scale; there was the great party she gave once a year, and, besides that, there were small ones. During this winter it was just these small exclusive parties that had caused so much envy in those who had not been invited. Some shrewd minds discovered that they were given only for the sake of the judge.

But people did not know that the only attraction in them to the judge—that very reserved man—was the presence of Gunvor Thorsdatter. The hostess did not know it either. She liked to be with the judge; she found the evenings tedious when he did not join them.

The judge, she thought, paid his court with unusual delicacy; in his manner there was something irresistible—a pleasant moderation, a certain subdued warmth that had nothing to do with the heart; these superficial attentions,

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however, were not detected by her ; she herself never felt very deeply. It was such a good thing to be able to control oneself, she thought. They really harmonised excellently.

She considered him a suitable match, and could not be blind to the fact that he sought her out and spoke with her on erotic subjects with pleasure. She did not doubt that he had loved before ; she did not forget to tell him that she never cared about being a man's first love. She found those who were making love for the first time so clumsy and dull.

But then Fru Jeannette came home, and she began to dispute with her for the possession of him.

Fru Jeannette was well provided for. She had her excellent Theodor, so she should have had no designs on him ; but still a flirtation of some sort was necessary to her. She always had been used to mixing with men who were in love with her, and she liked being flirted with ; she enjoyed it as something that she needed, something necessary to her existence. Her real being awoke when she was with men ; they were the stimulants she needed to develop her qualities ; they made the air she breathed, if not more rich in ozone, still, of rarer quality for her. Her eyes developed



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their mild lustre, her complexion grew clear and fresh.

Neither could she be unconscious of her power. First, she had beauty; and, secondly, she had what makes beauty unnecessary—over her person there hovered that luxurious femininity which, in spite of the “manslaughter” it causes, goes under the peaceful name of charm.

How could the judge escape if she condescended to have a little flirtation with him?

The rival lady's once great affection for Fru Jeannette died this winter. She thought it odd that the curate could not lead his wife to the Lord, and she wondered why he had married Fru Jeannette.

But she must have her big party.

The evening came. From the many candles and lamps burning under blue silk shades, a mystic light shone out over the road.

In the green drawing-room the hostess was having a little intimate conversation with Fru Jeannette, who was sitting there complacently, dressed in salmon-pink *moiré antique*, and with a crescent ornament in her dark hair.

It was Theodor who had persuaded her to get this becoming dress. He had wished it; and it was made just as Theodor would

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have it. It was her pride that she did everything to please Theodor. The other lady, who had no Theodor, had only herself to please, and it annoyed her to hear Fru Jeannette talk like that; for there was a certain charm in this married state; it was a pleasant form of existence—she knew that of old; no constitution was so absolute as this kind of wifely obedience. She would with pleasure give up her freedom as a widow for this bondage.

Fru Jeannette was looking round at the guests with her soft, melting smile. She was surprised at seeing Fru Thymann here; she had not asked her to come to her last party, for her troubles would have been too much to the fore, and Fru Jeannette could not stand that—why should she? Theodor did not want it; he was really excellent in protecting her in every way. . . . The widow was radiant all the evening, for Falck was in very high spirits and showed a lively interest in all that concerned her. She showed him a specimen copy of a magazine that was said to be very good; there was an article on woman's powers and another on the preserving of eggs.

Yes, certainly, he advised her to take it!

But at that moment arrived Her Excellency

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of Haero—for thus the widow had once in a witty mood baptized Gunvor.

She always came so absurdly late, and to-night her arrival was particularly disturbing! What a pity she hadn't stayed at home!—for the judge grew absent-minded as usual and left his hostess's circle.

After a while he went and sat down in the green drawing-room, where Torgersen was conversing with the sheriff. At the other side of the room Gunvor sat, observing them with quiet thoughtful looks. Torgersen developed quite a passionate eloquence in trying to convince the sheriff that the victory of so-called good or evil in a soul was merely a question of accident.

Everything depended on circumstances: what was considered virtue might just as well have been vice had the circumstances been otherwise; and morality was nothing but calculation. The sheriff had lately been studying a large work on the Fatalism of Soul Organism . . . what had he understood of its contents? Was this fatality occasional or absolute? was there any possibility of conquering oneself? Falck did not listen to the sheriff's replies. He looked incessantly at Gunvor; he tried in her face to read her thoughts. He triumphed, for it was

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no use for the forehead and the eyes to pretend that nothing was the matter.

She rose and went out of the room.

The sheriff had begun to speak of the Eternal Calling, but when he found Torgersen was not listening he rose and went away too.

He was not pressed to stay. He had become very tedious since the gout had laid hold of him; he had turned religious, and now he plagued every one about their Calling. The judge was a better listener; he did not interrupt.

And Torgersen went on talking. From hypnotism he passed on to politics. He thought it quite natural that the sheep up here should be Conservative, but he considered the judge too good for a shepherd. . . . Then he began to talk of himself. He was a Determinist—he could undertake to provide sufficient reasons for all he did, if only he had not such a bad memory. . . . “Look here!” he interrupted, and in his usual unceremonious way he took a book out of his pocket and threw it on the table.

Falck smiled and took up the book. “Ah! the Arabian Tales! Very good; our hostess must have them.”

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He turned the leaves, and, looking at Torgersen, with a strange, intent expression, he quoted in a half-solemn, half-jesting tone: "What tribe among the Arabs come you from, who expose yourself to such dangers for the sake of a little girl?"

Torgersen laughed and bowed in the Arabian way with outstretched arms.

Falck went on: "By God, O Prince, the glance that is thrown out over the edge of the veil is enough to bring trouble anywhere." Then he turned and looked at him inquiringly.

What did he know?

The two men measured each other for a moment with their eyes; then the curtain was drawn aside and Gunvor stood before them.

Torgersen got up, bent his knee and kissed her hand: "Most radiant Mistress, command what you desire!"

"We are to have supper," she said coolly.

Falck had risen, smiling: "And you come back to tell us, so that the salt of the earth should not perish of hunger."

She smiled faintly and went before them.

There had been some enjoyable dancing. The widow had been one of the most

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youthful herself; everybody thought it was such a pretty sight to see her and the judge dancing in the *quadrille française*. Then she had withdrawn to the dining-room, accompanied by the ladies who were her staff at present. Fru Jeannette had come in later, and then, of course, some of the gentlemen.

And it must be admitted that great animation prevailed; there were no awkward pauses. People were sociable; the soft hum of conversation about nothing never ceased for a moment. They had tea, and many nice things were said, especially of the cup of tea that Fru Jeannette drank, bending her swan-like neck the while.

In one corner Gunvor was talking to Fru Thymann, who was out for the first time since her illness and looking round with puzzled glances. Her fingers could not be still; she had forgotten her knitting. And now there were so many things to be done at home; she did not know what to begin with. It was the doctor who had forced her to go to this party. Gunvor soothed her and made her think of other things.

The judge was standing near, gaily conversing with Fru Jeannette. Gunvor happened to notice them once or twice. The words fell so glibly and civilly, but the tone seemed to

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her insincere and slighting, and there was indignation in the glances she shot at him. She had several times noticed this in his manner towards women, this shade of a certain *laissez-aller* that to some of the ladies seemed great gallantry. Was it only she who understood it—only she who had the opportunity of comparing it with his way of treating herself?

She smiled involuntarily at this thought, and did not quite know what she answered Fru Thymann. Twice their eyes met. She grew a little paler and found herself mechanically shutting and opening one hand.

It was natural. What woman in all the world could help being touched by such a look of homage as he could give?

It reminded her of a thought that had crossed her mind as a child when she saw the sea for the first time.

After the glamour of the sight had passed away, its image was left in her memory wrapped about with glory. At this moment it seemed to reassert itself and build round her a vast temple, glorious and high.

At last, at last she had found something that was great enough for her!

She sat with a half-smile round her lips, in

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her usual thoughtful manner, leaning slightly on the arm of the chair.

She did not notice that Fru Thymann had suddenly become talkative and forgetful of all the work awaiting her; she listened absent-mindedly to Falck's gay tirade against the attacks on lonely bachelors. He wanted Aunt Vikka to acknowledge that one's rights as a man ought not to be infringed because one had the rare sense to avoid marriage. People wanted their prejudices beaten out of them and wider interests beaten in; their education ought to be taken in hand at once. . . . Aunt Vikka looked at him with the gentle, somewhat oddly dignified little manner that was characteristic of her. Then she shook her white head, smiled, and went in with Fru Thymann to watch the cotillon that had just begun.

Falck sat down at the small table and looked into some albums; then he laid them together again.

Gunvor was alone in the room with him.

The light fell softly from under the blue silk shades. They were sitting silent, as they had so often done before—but yet it was not as before. Like a voiceless Arachne, silence drew them into her net and forced them to betray themselves.



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They both knew that their hearts held a secret; both of them meant to struggle through without the other knowing or guessing it.

Falck sighed involuntarily. In her near presence a great longing, a kind of home yearning, came over him. He thought of his mother; then he smiled and passed his hand gently over his eyes. On the whole he felt wonderfully happy. She was with him!

She began talking. She could not have told why her manner assumed a lightness and gaiety that was most unusual with her.

Falck noticed nothing. He only knew it was she who was talking to him.

When she saw he was not listening, she grew puzzled and distressed. Finally, she sat with him in total silence; it was as if his silence held her spell-bound.

Neither of them felt quite comfortable, but neither could find words.

Her mouth quivered a little. He had never seen her look so charming.

The big lamp was gradually going out. In the corners of the room it was dark; the twilight threw over them a feeling of restful intimacy.

Gunvor heard her heart beating. Had the silence been so long that it had betrayed

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her, or had it been so short that it had revealed nothing? . . . A bluish, quivering veil of darkness fell over them, only broken by the ray of light from the Etruscan bronze lamp in a corner, burning dimly as a night-light.

Falck rose, and paced up and down the room; then he sat down again a little nearer her.

Every movement he made set her heart throbbing. She could not see him, but she felt him—in the air around her, in the music from outside. She leaned forward and rested her head against her hand. Something drew her irresistibly; what it was and whither it called she knew not.

But as she sat there, she became filled with a great ecstasy of joy.

Like ripples in a whirlpool, hidden thoughts and vague little words came back to her. The air was filled with sweetness and light; they held converse with each other in their own voiceless way. A stream of inaudible words passed from soul to soul. . . . She felt like one caught by a current from which she could not free herself. She sat there mute and powerless. The least sound echoed within her like vibrating notes on an instrument of music; she could hear her heart beating and the blood rushing through her

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veins. She tried to control herself; she struggled to regain her ordinary consciousness; she made an effort to fathom the deep abysses of feeling which had undermined her strength. She rose, moved to another chair, and said a few indifferent words—the silence had lasted too long. Now she knew it!

His eyes grew larger; they shone through the darkness like twin stars. He rose. He wanted to see her face better, and he turned up the lamp. It flamed up for a minute and then went out.

But he had seen her looking deadly pale, with a faint smile on her lips. And he sought for her eyes and found them; his eyes rested for a second on hers.

Then they were again sitting as before. Neither of them could break the spell.

“Light comes to me out of the darkness!” His voice was quavering and soft: “Are you that light? What do you say?”

“Nothing,” she said slowly and steadily. But the next moment she bent her head and burst into tears.

A violent thrill of joy passed through Falck. He had never seen her cry, and he knew that very few people had.

He went up to her and tried to take her

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hand; he wanted to take her in his arms and tell her everything—but he dared not.

She was sitting motionless, as if she no longer felt his presence.

He took a rose out of his buttonhole and put it in front of her.

“Take it,” he said softly. “You were saying just now to Fru Thymann that you didn’t sleep well; take this, it is the symbol of silence; it stills the voices of the mind. But it has a voice of its own. Listen to what it says!”

Gunvor had risen hastily, and was standing there quite still, leaning against the table, as if arrested by bodily weakness. She took the rose, and vanished from the room.

He went on sitting there alone, filled with a solemn joy. He would not let his thoughts dwell on the future. Why dilute his cup of happiness? But, stop, not so fast! Would he not have to cope with the world and its evil forces?

The world would rob him of his happiness, for the world had a grudge against him. He would conquer the scruples of the world; he would beg for mercy. Surely he needed to rest after the anguish of life, to put his head into her lap and rest!

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A maid entered and took away the lamp.

It was now quite dark ; that was good !

He folded his hands and prayed that the cotillon might last long, that the young merchants from Bergen would not give the ladies a moment's peace, for how could he bear to meet anyone now, when he knew that Gunvor of Haero loved him !

Still, it was not true, it was only a dream—inside the soul there was only a footprint of the happiness which had come to visit him and had gone again. But it had been a dream of wonderful potency. It still enveloped him with sunshine. There was light within ; it shone forth from his eyes ; a new strength pulsed through his heart—ran like electricity through him to his fingers' ends ! A dream of spring visiting him now when the noble and beautiful in his life was dead ! Now, when he had already fallen a prey to loneliness and the world had passed him by !

A fear awoke within him ; he dreaded what she might want. He who had suffered from the lingering complaint of dissipation that can never be really cured—would she not demand something impossible from him, something that was already spent, a power that had been laid waste ? How should he

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be able to follow her—he, a sore-footed, restless wanderer from a strange land—he, whose fate it was to go about groping his way through life until his death? What did it matter? She was to him as dew on thirsty grass!

No, he must not take himself too seriously! Of course, he was no culprit! He was going to warn her; nothing could be built on the ground of his restless soul. She should not trust to his heart; it was dark——

How should he be able to tell her of all that was despicable in him? If she would come now, this royal maiden unconscious of the majesty which God had given her, if she would only come now, he would know what to do; he would kneel down. . . . No, he would fly from her presence. He saw that she demanded the whole of his being—that was more than was possible. She threw him into a state of irritation—he would not be reminded of his own ideals. A ghastly wound was opened up; she made him see that he was unsound, that there was something in his own organism which was diseased—perhaps only one small muscle, but that was enough. And no one could understand—not even *she*—that the only happiness left him was the chance of escaping great

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calamities. He could not begin anything new. He had suffered once; he would not suffer any more! Perhaps it was moral cowardice on his part, but he could not help it.

A servant entered with the lamp filled. There was now a horrid, glaring light. The cotillon was over, and in a moment the room was filled with laughing, chattering people.

Falck had risen quickly; for fear of showing his feelings, he assumed an unusual gaiety. There were other reasons why he forced himself to join the lively throng: he had to make it clear to himself and to another person that nothing had happened.

Gunvor also had come in again. She looked at him a few times with a thoughtful expression in her eyes—a mute, wondering pain.

He noticed it and grew more vivacious in his *badinage*, and still more engrossed by Fru Jeannette.

Later on, when the party began to break up, it was Torgersen who was in high spirits; he did not want to go; he had no desire to go home and to bed when it was so pleasant here. And he confided to Fru Thymann, while helping her on with her many cloaks, that it was exceedingly nice

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to feel at home on this earth which he had heard described as a vale of tears from his youth up.

Fru Thymann looked at him with dull, undiscerning eyes, and let herself be wrapped up carefully. Falck escorted Fru Elin down to her boat. Gunvor and Aunt Vikka followed. As she passed down the dark steps of the bridge, Falck gave her his hand.

"Thank you," she said slowly, taking it; but she drew her hand away again and went down the steps alone. "Good night," she said quietly. "Svein, why are you staying up there? What is the matter with Irmild?"

As they sailed home, Torgersen found it very quiet in the stern of the boat. Fru Elin was peacefully sleeping, and from Gunvor not a sound came. She sat leaning slightly backward, with her hand round the helm.

"Are you tired?" he asked. When she did not answer, he thought that she was asleep. Then he stole up into the bow to Irmild, who was humming in a low tone.

They arrived home, and went to their own rooms.

Fru Elin did not hear Gunvor go to hers,



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but she thought nothing about it. Fru Elin had never been so well satisfied as now; never so peaceful and happy in her mind.

There had been a storm at sea. Now the long waves were coming in and breaking against the shore. Gunvor went down there. She could go nowhere else.

The sea was infinitely dark, the sky was gloomy; nowhere in the world could she be but here. The waves came on and rushed into her burning soul, demanding: "What have you done?" That was what she wanted to know; that was why she had come here. She paced up and down with uncertain steps, stopped for a moment, and then started again as before, restlessly, painfully. She only wanted to commune a little with herself down here, to rouse herself a little, to prepare herself for what was to be her life—for what she was going to suffer.

But instead of this all her suffering in the past came back to her.

She was not more than seven years old. It was a night such as this. Never could it be wiped out from her memory; it was the first time that suffering reached her. She had fancied that an old woman came up out of the sea, took her hand, and said: "Come,

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follow me!" and she had said, "Yes." Smarting with a sense of injustice she had stolen out that night. She would speak with God, and she felt that she must go down here to meet Him. "O God, why hast Thou done this?" she had asked; "why hast Thou put me here, and why hast Thou done this thing? It is cruel and wrong! Thou dost not care for me, or Thou wouldst not do it!"

And the sea had risen and come to her. The waves embraced her in their mighty on-rush and wiped away the pain. Afterwards when Sidsel found her, all was well. Now she was here again—would help be given her?

She sat down on the shore and laid her head against the hard rock; she did it with wistful tenderness—for was not the earth her mother? She would make confession to her who alone could understand. She was glad that it was night and that all was dark and still! Would the great waves rush in and sweep away all that pained her? Would the song of the sea melt her sorrow into nothing? The waves came—proud in their movements, courageous as the voice of righteousness; they rolled in to the shore, came straight up to her feet and

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whispered solemnly. Again the memo returned: she saw herself a child with insatiable longing for something, she not know what, something great, shape as infinite joy—as far-off music. Afterwards it became a dream. Nothing was mighty as the dream; it had the radiance of a thousand glittering seas!

Sidsel had read to her from the fables: "Once upon a time there was a burning, fiery lake. No one could go forward without walking through it." And this had thrown light on her mind; she looked round with brave eyes, crying, "I will walk through it!" But Sidsel did not hear her; she went on: "The bear has black and reddish brown hair; that is because he has passed over the burning, fiery lake. The wolf has red and white spots; that is because he, too, has passed over the burning, fiery lake. None has passed through it without being marked. Then she had cried and said again, "I will walk through it!"

Was she to feel ashamed before the child? Was she now to cover her head saying: "I dare not"? For now, when she had arrived at the burning lake where she must pass over in order to get thro

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her life; now the moment had come when her fate must be decided!

Those who have arrived at the parting of the ways—do they not always go to the wrong side? People always do!

No, she would not go on thinking; she could not. She sat there motionless, with full and wide-stretched eyes. There came a low murmuring from under the rocks—mysterious and awesome; it forced its way into the stone with a hoarse and hollow sound. Out on the headland the red light-house was blinking a faithful eye, keeping watch with her.

She would tell everything to the night wind; she would tell of the surging of her blood. No, it was not true! She loved Svein! When he came as before and put his arm round her, and she looked into his tender eyes, then she felt that she loved him; and when he asked her to forget what was unpleasing to her, she did it, because she loved him.

But each time she had felt in her heart that what he gave her was not enough. She had again felt the longing of her childhood; she had again thought, as then, that there was no joy in anything less than the greatest——

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Unconsciously she rose and began to pace up and down, so fast that she had to stop to take breath.

But when they loved each other! When they were bound together with bands that could not be broken—so sacredly binding that they could never be unloosed! A gracious feeling awoke within her, a gentle, protecting motherliness. She was responsible for him; she must be careful. All the good in his nature that he himself risked losing must be saved.

A shiver went through her. Never would she let Svein go, as she had once in shy and childish fear let go a man who afterwards was lost; she would not help a second time to spoil a life. It would be all right for Svein; she had given him her word! She stopped her walk and pressed both her hands to her temples; she was whispering something to herself.

It was true, after all, that in her soul there was something she must not utter! It was true that even when she had been happiest she had not been wholly happy. Now she knew, for now she understood what might have been; she felt that there were unappropriated forces in her soul—that her longings had never been satisfied. And

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the struggle to choke all this, the effort to banish all thought of it from her mind, had brought her deadly weariness.

A glitter of joy was in her eyes; she drew a long breath and uttered a cry of relief.

For now the greatest of all had come to her! She did not know how. She felt that she was standing on holy ground. A shudder and an ecstasy passed through her; she felt that she must kneel. Here was the glory dreamt of in her childhood; here was one who wrapped her in a vaulted temple's peace. And in this knowledge all was different—an eye that saw, an ear that heard. Never more would there be cold and loneliness! For the first time she felt her heart filled with a glorious, unutterable calm; she would quietly rest her head on his breast, happy as a bird in the nest; she had found a home for her soul. But deep down amidst the joy there is the sorrow—it is like the summer; the darkness is behind, in waiting, and the reason it pours forth its gifts with lavish haste is that poor mortals may taste life before they die. Had she been granted hers already? For now the way by which they came was barred. Like Moses she had looked into the Land of Promise; but afterwards a thousand pains befell and shut it out. Like

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an indifferent stranger he had looked at her; his eyes had told her that it was not true. There was no room for doubt! With a petrifying pain she realised that the day after he might be another man—no longer king, no longer high-priest within temple walls, but wretched, weak, a slave to his own weakness. At last she had been forced to admit what the rest of the world could see so well! There was a gulf between them that could not be bridged; they could never stand together on firm ground.

She hid her face with a groan. He, too, had failed her! Not even he was great enough! Suppose she slept for the next hundred years, would it be different then, or would she awake to find herself as much alone on earth?

She gently stroked her face.

It pained her that she could not forgive him. Why could she not understand him sufficiently to have mercy on him? Was it not a very usual thing for people to begin on a great scale and end by doing nothing? And she could not see him as he was. He was not yet a broken man.

Was there any one like him? He was a prince among men!

At this moment it passed through her like

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a shudder that Falck possessed what Torgersen not even knew by name. In his nature she saw a noble manliness such as she had never met before, and, she knew that in his inmost soul there was something untainted, noble, and pure—an atmosphere of goodness.

She stopped suddenly and asked herself aloud the questions: "Did she love him? Had she loved him for long?"

And Svein—O God! He and Svein? . . . He or Svein? She raised her arms above her head and rocked herself to and fro; she could not stand still; it was as if she were treading on hot coals.

There came a gust of wind from the north. She stepped under a sheltering block of stone which the sea had lately thrown up on the shore. She stood there, half unconscious, with a grey face and bloodless lips. One hand opened and shut itself convulsively. . . .

And he had given her a rose, the sign of the silence that had laid itself between them! . . . His eyes had sought her answer, and then he had withdrawn himself, as was his way, behind a veil of baffling coldness. Was he afraid lest the careless hands of men should touch the holy thing? Was it that he could not endure the thought of the mean tongues of



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the world deriding what they could not understand, and staining it with their foul, narrow thoughts? Was *that* the reason why he had drawn back? . . . Or had he something to repent of?

Then she would say: "Why do you go away? Do you not see there is a holy light about us? Let us kneel and tender grateful worship for a reminder of God's image in us! I will tell him that!" she whispered passionately; "for what will the tongues of the world matter to us? Ask the wild eagle of the sea if he will stay in his flight because of human beings creeping on the earth!" She would tell him not to reproach himself, but to calm his fears about the past!

She raised her head, smiling, and she gazed outwards and tried to find expression for all that filled her soul—words great and mighty as the sea.

Still, there was no escape from loneliness! All was dark—all was over! She could see nothing left for her to do.

But, yes, suffering at least remained. To stand and watch the scorching fire as it devoured her life with glowing tongues of flame—this was still left for her. Was there no escape from the remorse of failing to do

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her duty to man? When was salvation to be found for her cold, iron will?

She had once wished to do something great, to hitch her waggon to a star; but now she understood that great deeds can be done quite silently, without the help of stars; that even the very greatest deed may be to find one's way in the dark without them. . . . But she could not! She would complain as she had done in her childhood: "O God, Thou dost not love me to let me suffer this!"

But men must suffer, she knew that. Had not Jesus Himself cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" His sweat fell to the ground like drops of blood! Who had the strength to endure as He did?

And there were always people who must give their heart's blood; why should she be spared?

Here the waves were surging as a thousand years before, and the same stars were looking down upon them. Was there anything new under the sun? There was nothing to be done; in the end all would be well.

A thrill of joy passed through her when she thought of dying, of sleeping deep in the ground. . . .

It was flood-tide; the sea had come straight

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up to the place where she was sitting. It murmured softly at her feet; it was like a mother's whisper.

She watched how it sank back, met the new wave and barred its passage; she watched with vague interest how the wave rose, struggled and freed itself, and then, moaning, rolled back over the pebbles.

She sat there like one benumbed, exhausted utterly. She remembered nothing; she was wholly occupied with what she saw around her. How many nice smooth stones there were. . . . that would be something for Little Gunn. . . . Up among the sand there were tide-marks after the flood that always was in such a hurry. . . . She thought she was dead. There was somebody who came and took her away from the tiresome struggle of life—and now nobody would drag her into it again! . . . Afterwards she found out that she was not dead, but only sitting alone, and all the horrors of loneliness and night fell upon her. . . . They are eternally the same; they are constantly recurring . . . the dark storm wakes them; they come up out of the sea.

She heard the flapping of heavy wings, saw dead staring eyes. . . . They came and drew her down into the mighty current.

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And all was quiet and cold . . . she felt the dark, icy wave that dragged her with it. She heard the cry: "You too, at last, have fallen a prey to us!"

The cold wind from the sea increased; it swept around her, twisted and dragged her dress, and sent the foam of the sea up into her face. She opened her eyes wonderingly.

The moon had risen; she looked out into the moonlit infinite space before her and then dropped her tired lids again. The icy-cold, wintry moon enhanced the loneliness. . . . She was on the point of sinking into unconsciousness again, when she noticed that the Russian schooner out beyond was having a desperate struggle. They were using the ship-pump and bailing out water in pails, and some were up in the rigging, chanting.

She listened to the slow and strangely sad refrain of the Russian chants. They were borne to her with the whisper of the winds and waves, and they passed through her soul like sword-blades.

They came to her like the utterance of one vast plaint voicing the sea of pain that men have caused each other. . . . She had forgotten herself now that there had come a message to call her back to work. . . .

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With a violent effort of will she rose.

What was at the bottom of all her suffering ? The greatest thing in the world—the thing one lives and dies for. She would let no one rob her of that ; she would suffer no one to spoil her life. She would not be checked, she who had so much to do. . . . She began to walk quickly ; her blood grew warmer and tingled in her veins.

She had no time for this sort of thing—she must go straight forward !

She had only to take things calmly. One could not always see the shore ; some time the storm and the sea surge must come ! . . . Was it not the wide sea that she had wished for, that she had demanded, as her proud right ? She should not let this check her ! She ought not to dare to offer to herself anything but the highest, for was she not a woman born with the power of self-mastery ? . . . And was not life her realm ? . . . The sun and the great wastes belonged to her. Every power in the world, was it not her servant ?

She went on, pale and trembling, but a resolution, hard as iron, shone in her eyes : she would wrestle as Jacob wrestled with God. She *wanted* to be happy, why should she not then ? Why not pluck the ripe fruits

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from life's tree? Why content herself with anything else?

And she would ask for nothing! If there was anything else . . . others could have it!

She would not, like a beggar, collect a little here and a little there to piece together something that might be called happiness. They could do that for whom it was enough.

And another power broke forth, stronger than mighty pride: a mild, unconquerable courage, a well of quiet, patient tenderness, a pity for the race of man.

She felt, as with a thousand senses, that there were people crying to her for help. She ought to try to light the candles for those who were sitting in darkness, and to keep watch with them lest their light should fail. To help to prepare the world for the enjoyment of true happiness—the blessed peace where no alloy of bitterness can find a place! . . . All the short-sighted wanderers on this earth, wending their weary way towards the tomb, misguided, restless, heavy-laden—these should be helped forward on the darkened road towards that other country which is wholly blest, because man brings not suffering to man. . . .

She gazed out towards the place where

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moonlight shone between the waves as they rose and fell along the glittering pathway.

Did not all voices here tell the same tale? She listened to what the sea and the earth would bid her do: nothing greater could be done! She again laid her cheek to the rock; could a mother forget her child? The earth, the eternal mother, could not.

She listened. She heard its spirit rise to heaven; it was as if a thousand voices blended in one great surge of sound.

She felt as one who had just knelt alone in holy stillness at the blest Supper of the Lord. Her strength and courage had come back to her! The horizon had widened; in the heart of mother earth were many blessings. . . .

She drew the cloak tighter round her and went slowly homewards.

It was daylight. In the road leading up to her home she met the curate, who was returning to his bed after a visit to a sick person. He looked at her and thought that she was changed. She was so strangely pale. He went up to her and took her hand. "Have you been out?" he asked, troubled.

She nodded quietly and tried to pass on.

## The Storm Gathers

But he would not let her go. Something had happened to her.

He again took her hand. "Gunvor, mother of Haero," he said passionately, "thou art a glorious vessel, created to glory; let thyself come to glory. Fight for the salvation of thy soul!"

She turned towards him: "I have done so to-night."

He took a step backwards and stared at her. He saw that it was true.

A gentle majesty sat on her, a calmness almost divine.

"Now I know that you are repenting," he said softly. "May the Lord bless you and give you His peace!"

She lifted her head. Her eyes shone.

He went slowly up to her. "Can I help you?" he said.

"Thank you," she answered gently, "but there is an old proverb that says, 'Help can come only through one's own right hand'!"

He stood looking after her.

Up in the courtyard she met Little Gunn, who came running towards her. She was only going down to the sea. She, too, had a habit of going down there the first thing in the morning; Fru Elin said it was in the blood.



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But Gunn had a new frock on, and she had run all through the house to show herself to Gunvor. Now she kept turning round, asking: "Isn't it pretty? Don't you like it?"

Gunvor took the child in her arms.

Her life, too, must be thought of! She should grow up in happiness; no one should break through and steal.

She bent down and gently talked to her about her childish pets—about the big doll, and the cat and Grimm.

Little Gunn regarded Gunvor with proud admiration in her eyes. "Can you always say 'r' properly?" she asked. She herself had great difficulty in pronouncing her 'r's,' and Fru Elin made fun of her for not being able to talk properly yet. "Do you know," she said entreatingly, and clung to Gunvor's arm, "do you know what I shall do when I grow up—no, when I am old and dead?"

Gunvor bent down and kissed her.

"There is Dwim waiting; I must go in to mother!"

She went upstairs and changed her dress, after which she came down again.

In the dining-room stood Fru Elin. She had just come down and was waiting for

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breakfast. Those two always had breakfast together.

Gunvor went up to her and said good morning. The old lady looked at her and nodded quietly and gently. Gunvor laid her cheek to hers. "Speak to me!" she said softly.

Fru Elin could not hear well. She did not notice the slight trembling in the voice or the changed accents. She smiled and began to talk of household matters. "What do you say to Ezekiel's having got the offer of a situation in Bergen?"

"But he won't go," she nodded, after a pause. "He could succeed there, but he won't go. He wanted to better his position here," she said deliberately; "that did not succeed, but still he will not leave."

A dark flush rose in Gunvor's face. She looked beseechingly at her mother. "I could not help it!" she said slowly.

Fru Elin laughed and nodded: "Of course, the boy himself saw that it was impossible, though he is a good fellow and of a good family; but he is getting very sulky, and I am often reproving him for it."

Fru Elin did not see that Gunvor's face had again become quite white.

"The sea was very rough last night," she

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said, after a while, "but it did not come in. If there is any cod out at the islet to-day, it would be good weather for catching it."

Svein had gone out; she wanted to know when he would be back. She turned to her daughter.

Gunvor did not know.

Fru Elin was in good spirits to-day; she did not notice that Gunvor's voice was low, as if it had lost all strength and tone. She was in a talkative mood, and she soon began again, first about the cow-sheds, then about the fish. She got up and patted her daughter's head, as was her custom, and then went out to do her housekeeping.

In the old days she had been keen with the keenness of expectant youth to notice all that passed, especially the hard things of life; but now her senses were mercifully blunted, so she did not observe much below the surface of what happened around her. Gunvor looked after her fondly. What a relief it was to find that she no longer worried over everything. She rose, pressed her hands hard against her forehead, threw on a cloak and went down to the office.

## CHAPTER V

### AFTERWARDS—REST

IT was a day in the middle of summer. A festival was being held at Haero.

From old times it had been the custom for the people to have their feast when the fishing was over and summer had come—and all the good old customs were kept up at Haero.

Everybody was gay, for they all expected to enjoy themselves, especially at the dancing; Boot Tobine even ceased her sad fisher-song that day. She had learnt a quite new, gay song from a native of Soudmore. But most people felt that there was some solemnity about the feast this year, for the left wing was now ready; in two days the banns were to be published between Gunvor of Haero and Dr. Torgersen. Everything was to be as before, but still there were to be changes in the family, and that always makes for a certain seriousness.

It was such pleasant summer weather that everybody was out of doors. The little children were running about like kittens. The boys took hold of each other and dragged

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themselves from place to place, marching about arm in arm and playing all sorts of games.

On the lawn there was dancing for old and young. All the people of the house were there; Gunvor had opened the dance with Ezekiel. The judge also was present. He had danced with Serianna, and Serianna afterwards told everybody that when the judge was friendly he was very nice, and she valued his attentions more than if the rector had taken her in to supper.

The weather was most favourable to them. The sea lay shining and murmuring softly; it effaced the shadows and lifted the burdens from the mind. Winter was forgotten.

The old people felt themselves young again, and the young ones had got their heart's desire. Only here and there was one who felt in the midst of the joy a cold breath from the darkness that was waiting to return.

The judge had sat down beside Fru Elin and amused himself by looking on.

They were dancing with wonderful buoyancy, even the old people. In a faithful, close embrace they danced, husband and wife, holding each other's sturdy waists with their strong sunburnt hands. Dull old cotters turned round, with their pipes in their mouths and a

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quiet gaiety lurking in their eyes; the wives went through the dance with calm, solemn faces—to-day was like a day of youth to them. Fru Elin always saw to it that somebody was at home looking after the house and children for them on these occasions.

The judge grew a little impatient. Gunvor did not come. She and Svein were always on the move, and when she was not dancing, she went round talking to everybody and providing for their entertainment. But when for the second time she gave Ezekiel her hand for a dance, then the judge looked at Fru Elin astonished. He was himself thinking that he might venture to ask her.

Fru Elin noticed his glance. "They have grown up together," she said. "There used to be nobody who could dance a reel as they could. His grandfather was the man who threw a cask of gold overboard, and his father was obliged to turn out of the family property adjoining ours."

After that there was little dancing!

All crowded together to look at them, without knowing what it was that made each movement full of so much charm.

Falck moved a little further up to see better. There was no one else dancing. Gunvor wore a dark stuff dress, and a red silk scarf loosely

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folded round her shoulders; the blood had risen to her cheeks, her eyes were slightly drooping; he could not catch their expression. He could not help admiring Ezekiel's well-grown and supple figure, but he started when he saw his face. The usual melancholy expression was gone, the brows were no longer contracted, and the eyes were free to express themselves as proud and daring. Nothing was impossible. . . .

The judge fell into deep thought.

After this, nothing would induce Ezekiel to dance again.

Gunvor had gone up to Svein. They sat for a while on the same seat. He had his arm round her waist.

A little distance away from them Ezekiel was standing, staring at them. His face was again changed; his lips were passionately pressed together, and his eyes glowed. He glanced first at Torgersen and then at Falck, and he looked as if he would crush them both. His hands were clenched. At this moment he hated everyone who came from the South. What were they doing up here? . . . Yes, they were come to plunder, to make money out of other people's work; they were come to steal the rays God's blessed sun poured on these parts, to obtain by stealth his lot and

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share of earthly joy, so that he sat alone amidst the darkness. . . .

Falck had gone to sit down beside Aunt Vikka and had been chatting gaily for some time, when suddenly he became silent. He happened to look at Ezekiel again.

Then Gunvor went to sit down with her mother.

Falck moved nearer and so did Aunt Vikka ; she wanted to know if Gunvor would not take some rest.

Gunvor smiled at her. She was certainly not tired, but now they could get on alone ! Of course Aunt Vikka knew that it was an old custom for her to dance one reel. . . .

Falck felt in such good spirits that he forgot that he had had no dance.

Her soul was in her eyes ; they were like those of a child with a far-away smile in them.

A new, strange feeling, as from the heart of spring, surged up within him ; a sweet emotion held him fast, he knew not why.

There came a gust of wind blowing first over her, then over him—a light caress for both !

He could not understand what made him feel so gay.

Was it because he knew life's limitations



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and was content? He remembered no past and saw no future; he only felt this blissful present in which she sat near him and Torger-sen was out of sight. He breathed another air, he inhaled it with unspeakable satisfaction.

Involuntarily their eyes met for a moment.

Suddenly he laughed; he could not help it. She looked at him with a pained expression. He noticed it, and said, smiling: "Oh, I was only thinking of something amusing!"

The amusing thought was that she who sat there was in a few days to be married to another man. He had thought of asking her to-day if she could do it; now it occurred to him that he had better do it afterwards when they were alone. She did not say a word to him; she had not even asked him to come up to the house. He must invite himself now—well, he could do that. He said nothing more.

But it tore his heart to find her so calm and self-contained. Good Lord, to discover that she was so well balanced in mind at such a time! Perhaps even she was content with all things as they were!

He could not endure that; he would ask her afterwards. . . . It was too light as yet; she sat with a golden halo round her in

## Afterwards—Rest

the quiet air. But afterwards might not a miracle happen? One ought certainly to happen sometimes, if only justice and divine mercy were exercised completely! Did she not believe in all that, even if she did not use precisely the same expressions as the rector? . . .

“Do you think that the age of miracles is past?” he asked.

She looked up. “No!” she answered.

“And that gives us courage, doesn’t it?”

She nodded.

They began talking to each other—but not of the thoughts that underlay their words. It was as if each of them was struggling; both were under the disheartening impression that their love was running a race with the odds against them. But he could not forgive her for her calm, beautiful expression. How could she dare to be so happy? That proud head—was it never bent? And that brave heart—did it never give in?

At this moment he could not stand it. It would be almost better if she had been always utterly cold and heartless.

He began talking of books in a slow, half-angry tone.

He was reading the apostolic fathers now

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. . . they had such strange ideas. He fixed his eyes on her.

Women always exaggerate!

The thought came *à propos* of nothing they were talking about. She looked at him, surprised. He went on: "Do you know what the spirit says of the strong woman: 'As long as it is night, her lamp is not extinguished.' Yes, so one reads in one place! And that is what is wrong, for at night it ought to be dark. . . . You are so cold that it chills one! Your eyes are hard!"

He rose suddenly and went away.

She looked after him with a mute reproach in her eyes. Did he scorn her because she demanded what was necessary to her, and was able to obtain it? . . . She stroked her face wistfully; then she rose and moved away.

He himself gave her strength for the fight when he showed her what an obvious necessity the fight was. There was still a veil between them; they did not see each other. She would not tear it away. She smiled bitterly. It was a good thing it was there!

For the rest of the evening his eyes followed her wherever she went; he did not lose

## Afterwards—Rest

one expression of her face, one glance of her eye. Once or twice she thought of asking him to go home, for she did not know if she would be able to endure it any longer.

He was thinking the whole time that now he would say it; but then he asked himself ironically, what, as a matter of fact, had he got to say. Had he not said far too much already?

Later on, when the party was over, he met them in the garden, Gunvor and Aunt Vikka. The latter had forgotten something, and they were left alone.

Now he would say it; but for the first few moments he was only conscious of the fact that she was there, she and the solemn, luminous calm, and a scent as of wine from the lindens.

Then he began. He wanted her to know all, and to see it with his eyes.

She was standing still, with anguish in her face. To her nature with its exacting honesty, all that he spoke so lightly of was quite inconceivable.

How could she give up Svein and break her promise? How could he break his? Did he not owe something to a sense of duty too?

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And while she stood there, there grew up within her an unutterable contempt for what he offered her so carelessly—as if the broken bonds counted for nothing . . . as if there were no yesterday and no to-morrow . . . so carelessly that it was possible he might repent as early as to-morrow.

She could not do it! She could not get away from what she had once promised; she could not take back that which she had given—it had become a part of her life, this promise. She would not forget it.

“You ought not to have said that!” she said quietly. “Why do you forget Svein? And have you the right to forget?”

“Do you also believe in Mina Yõns’ stories?” he replied.

He smiled nervously, and his tone was dry and sarcastic: “Well, you are right! She is very amusing, you are right there. I am exceedingly grateful to you for reminding me of my shortcomings. I can assure you I have many, most certainly.”

All at once he became gay and jovial.

She looked at him steadily.

“Gunvor!” he said, and went straight up to her, and his voice was no longer harsh. “If there were no hindrances—I mean, could you then . . . you *could!*”

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She was staring at him. It was as if in a lightning flash she saw revealed before her what his excuses meant. She looked into his soul with all its weakness; she saw herself, with her firm, honest will that would not yield one jot, that could not follow any path except the one which seemed the right. She drew back, deadly pale. "No!" she whispered quickly, "that would mean *too much* suffering." With a low moan she pressed her hands to her face.

At the end of the path Aunt Vikka met them again. Falck went forward to meet her, and walked off by another path to see her hyacinths.

When Gunvor went up to her room that night she did not go to bed, but sat down looking out of the window. It was good to sit listening to the sea. She bent her head to the window-sill.

There was a whisper from the shore. Voices and laughter were borne towards her.

Then a great sea wave came in; the rest drew back before it. Like a deep chant it rose and then fell back into the low, sweet chorus.

The wind called to her; it brought with it a message. All was silent in the house.

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She could hear her mother sleeping peacefully below.

But now there was a creaking on the stairs—somebody was stealing down. The door opened slowly. She knew that she herself had locked it.

She went up to the window that faced the courtyard and looked out, and then she drew back as if she had been struck.

It was Irmild, half-dressed. She had put Aunt Vikka's white shawl over her shoulders and was running down the road.

Gunvor went out quite silently so as not to wake her mother, utterly at a loss to think what it could mean. Could she have been taken ill?

She saw her running in front in her usual, gliding way, saw her turn off on the path to the doctor's house, and, after a leap, halt under the window, look round to all sides, then lift her hand and gently tap on the lower pane.

Gunvor had stopped behind the willow-tree at the last turning. She could not, for the moment, go any further; she grew stiff in all her joints.

She heard somebody answer from inside, she heard Svein come to open the door, she heard the sound of crying and a violent

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outburst and then laughter and talk, interrupted by embraces. Soft words, whispers—the door was shut again, both the bolts were drawn, and all was quiet.

A violent shiver passed over her. She sat down on a stone—exhausted. What could be the meaning of her going in there? It was not the first time it had happened, the whole scene showed that.

She tried to think a little.

Was everything going to crumble to pieces before her? The new life she had won at the cost of her own blood and lived by the strength of her will—the life she had fought so desperately to gain—this was to be robbed of its soul, to be ruined and cast away! She found it impossible to understand. It was as if the ground were giving way beneath her. She looked round in despair.

She could remember what it had cost her to be honest and true and brave. . . . And now they were laughing at her in there, scorning her who had spent a night of agony for them—given them of her heart's blood! No one had thought of her!

Was nothing true? Was there nothing one could have faith in?—no soul one could trust? She looked round with a vague questioning glance and pressed her hands to



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her temples. She would force herself to think what was to be done now.

Then she rose with an effort, sought out her bunch of keys, went down to the office and unlocked the post-bag that hung outside. She took out the letter in which the publication of the banns next Sunday was requested. What wonderful luck that the postman had not yet been there !

She went up into her room, crushing the letter in her hand ; she lighted a candle and watched it slowly burning.

She was thinking what extraordinary good fortune it was that the postman had not yet been there !

The next day was a Saturday, and there was all the Saturday rush of work ; everyone had enough to do. Torgersen had been sent for in the morning, and was not to come home before Sunday. He meant to go to the rectory over night, and then accompany the others home from church. They were to go there, all of them, to hear the banns published.

He was puzzled about Gunvor's conduct to him that morning. She had shut the office door against him, but afterwards she had followed him down to the shore ! Still she only nodded a farewell, and he had not

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dared to touch her. He had again been forced to think of Isis, but she would be banished for ever very soon, for in two days Gunvor of Haero was to be his wife!

On Sunday morning the journey to church was not of the kind they had expected.

Early in the morning Gunvor had gone to her mother. And then Aunt Vikka was sent for.

And when church time came, it was not Fru Elin's new, white, six-pair boat that was sent out.

The Haero family remained at home.

Irmild appeared as if whipped away from the house.

Little Gunn had been allowed to go, and some of the servants too.

Ezekiel was in charge of the boat. He did not say a word.

Svein Torgersen came back with them. His face was dark; no one had seen him look like this before. He pretended not to see Irmild, who was fighting against her tears.

When they landed he strode wrathfully up to the house. He wished to get hold of Gunvor. He had written the letter himself and put it into the bag. It had not reached its destination.

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But Gunvor was not to be found. She had gone out.

Anxious and excited, he looked for her. He saw her first at dinner. She sat between her mother and Aunt Vikka—quiet as usual, but pale.

He looked at her. She nodded to him kindly. He calmed down a little; but he was yearning to know what was the matter. Little Gunn and Ezekiel were there too, and the maid was waiting. That restrained him. They ate in perfect silence.

Fru Elin was holding her head high to-day. Her eyes were unusually clear, and she looked as if she were going to a joyous festival. Aunt Vikka's eyes were redder than usual. She ate scarcely anything, and her head trembled incessantly.

After dinner Svein and Gunvor were left alone in the parlour. Fru Elin and Aunt Vikka went to have their after-dinner nap. Little Gunn took Irmild out with her; she had promised to go with her to the shore. Torgersen stood before Gunvor, biting his moustache. He stepped towards her quickly. "Why did you not come to church to-day? Where is the letter? Wasn't it you who put it into the bag? It has not reached its——"

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"I have burnt it." She looked at him steadily, but grew white to the lips.

Svein started. On her mouth was the stern expression that he could not endure. He looked bitterly towards the door that had just been shut by Fru Elin. His voice was harsh and high-pitched as he asked: "Is it your mother starting her old tactics again?"

"It is yourself, Svein! You know best what is the answer to your question."

Svein grew deadly pale for a moment and pressed his fingers through his hair.

"I wanted to tell you yesterday when you went away. I *should* have said it—that was why I came down to the boat afterwards—but I could not. You must forgive me."

He did not answer, nor did he look at her. He took up a cigar and put it down again, looked for matches, and put them away again on another table. Then he walked quickly up to her with a beseeching, puzzled expression. "Gunn, what do you want? what do you mean?"

"You ought to have told me," she said quietly. "And you should not—no, you should not——" Her voice trembled; she stopped.

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He suddenly looked more at ease ; the dark cloud left his face.

“No, I should not,” he broke out frankly, “if it is only that, we shall surely agree ! No, by heaven, I ought not to have done it—but when it is so—yes, of course it is awfully stupid, but, you see, I would not annoy you, for I thought—yes, Gunvor, it is you I love, you know it is you I love. That’s clear.”

Gunvor began to tremble. She sat down in her mother’s old chair. “Is that all you have to say, Svein ?” she asked.

He was standing before her. He had become a little uneasy again.

She looked at him with an expression in her eyes that he had not seen before. He did not understand the depth of her pain ; he did not for a moment doubt but that all would be well again in an hour.

He went up to her and tried to take her in his arms—to ask for a smile. He could not, for the life of him, bear to have things in such a tangle.

But then she looked at him again, and there was something in her eyes that stopped him.

She pointed to a chair at the other side of the table.

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He sat down there, but he still attempted to make light of it.

“Gunvor, don’t sit in that solemn old chair! All the Haero family have uttered mandates from it. I can’t stand having to look up to you so much! See, it helps at once when you sit down there. Do you know, your eyes are most beautiful when they are not so proud! Don’t be so solemn and cold! Remember, life is short. Gunvor, let me kneel before you.”

“Stop, Svein, have you nothing else to say?”

“Yes, God bless you, certainly, I have excuses, if only you will hear them! I tell you I could not help it. I am a man of principle, and I had determined to withstand it, you know. I had made up my mind——” He fidgetted with his collar and then went on: “And I have no lack of determination either! I tell you I really believe she has hypnotised me. She has a very strange temperament, with an under-current of wild instincts. I believe in the force of suggestion and such things. It came upon me, so to speak, with the power of fate——” He bent over the table towards her. “Gunvor, if you only knew how little it means, and how infinitely I love you! You

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must not think I have forgotten you because of it. But, you see, she is such an alluring creature that one can't be cold to her, even if one wants to—and I really wanted to. Dear, you must not believe that the thought of you for a moment—it has always been you I have borne in my soul. I assure you that one's resolution may yield for a moment so that one is impelled to do a thing against one's will. Gunvor, you must believe me! But now she is grown-up, so I suppose you will send her away."

He looked straight into her eyes; he tried to win her with a look. Now, as before, she would be obliged to give in at last. It seemed to him altogether natural and right that he should have forgiveness for all his sins, this time as well.

Gunvor's eyes glittered with restrained anger.

"So, it is *her* fault?" she asked, with a shrug of the shoulders. At this moment she despised him.

Then a half-choked cry was heard; the door from the passage was thrown open. Irmild stood before them, her face stiff with horror.

With a cry she rushed up to Gunvor and

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clung to her; then she took a few steps back, looking from one to the other.

“I have been listening,” she whispered breathlessly; “at last I could not. . . .” She threw herself down on the floor, sobbing; she half-rose again and dragged herself to Gunvor’s feet. “I have not done it!” she burst out suddenly, defiantly. “Who can say I have? Nobody can say they saw it; then it is not true; then no one can believe it.”

Gunvor had risen; she went up to her and lifted her up. “I believe what you say!” she said calmly.

A dark wave of blood rushed into Irmild’s face; she looked up to her in despair and sought in her eyes for anything that condemned her.

“I have not done it,” she said, stammering; “no, it is not true—but you’ll get to know it all the same, so . . .”

“Yes, for now you have said it!”

Gunvor looked at her long and inquiringly; she examined her in another way than before.

Irmild trembled and avoided her glance, imbued with the terrifying feeling that this eye saw straight into her soul. “It is not true!” she repeated in despair. She knew of no other protection against those two



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who were standing there wanting to kill her. Then it suddenly struck her that she had betrayed herself and must go away. She rushed out of the room so hurriedly that she knocked over a chair, and ran, like one frightened out of her senses, through the passage, across the courtyard, and down the road.

Gunvor faced Svein and asked him a question. He turned from her and answered shrinkingly.

There was a deadly silence in the room. Some minutes passed.

Gunvor was standing in the same place. She breathed with difficulty; she felt as if the air would choke her.

And while she was standing thus her brows knitted themselves together. The small, vertical line that started from the bridge of her nose grew deeper; into her face there came a hardness suggestive of the cold, inflexible will within.

She took a few steps forward, lifted up the chair thrown down, and put it in its place.

Then she went up to Svein and gave him her hand. "Thank you for everything that has been good between us! Now you know it is all over!"

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He winced, but said nothing. He could not realise that she was in earnest.

“Gunvor, how sad it is that you are like this!” He burst into a flood of tears.

It struck her like a reproach.

“Yes,” she said quietly, sadly, “I also think it sad that I cannot be otherwise. For, it may be, there are other, better ways of dealing with such things. But, you see, Svein, I have loved you. What I felt for you is too good to be torn away like this, thread by thread, until nothing remains! You must not tear it any more. Now it is to be cut off, I will save the best of what has been—bear it inside me.”

He was silent and looked entreatingly at her; then he went out into the dining-room without knowing what he was doing, but came back again quickly, as if he might have lost her meanwhile.

“You don’t mean what you say, Gunvor, you don’t mean it?” He looked at her, irresolute as a child. He took her hand by force and pressed it to his cheek. “It cannot be over between us two!” he whispered, with more courage. “Don’t say it so determinedly! You must not decide as irretrievably as if you were hammering in a nail for time everlasting. It sounds so bad.

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It is a fault not to be able to alter a decision, a great fault."

"I know I have faults!"—she drew her hand away from him. "But when a thing is finished, then all is over. Can't you understand?"

Her tone was icy-cold. A change passed over her face.

She asked him yet another question about Irmild. He flushed, but he had no answer. She was standing straight in front of him; he could not escape her flaming, penetrating eyes.

"Then there will be a wedding here all the same!"

Her voice was low and sad. She added slowly: "For an end must be put to such things at Haero. I have promised it shall be so; for mother's and Little Gunn's sake, and for your sake, and for the sake of everybody, there must be an end to it!"

Svein had gone up to the window. He tried to look out, he tried to pretend that nothing had happened, then perhaps it would pass.

But it did not pass. Then he sat down at Aunt Vikka's work-table and dropped his head down among her balls of wool and sobbed.

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Gunvor went up and rested her hand on his hair.

“You will get on very well with her, Svein!” she said gently.

He did not raise his head. Her words seemed to him at this moment as the most cruel irony, the hardest, most cutting words that had ever been said to him. He sat there quite still. Gunvor went away. Shortly afterwards he saw her unfasten her boat and sail out. In the evening there were guests, but Gunvor had not come back. One of the men had seen her boat at Stenholmen.

Fru Elin shook her head. “Then she wants to be alone,” she murmured to herself.

For it was a place whereon no human being ever had set foot. The pent-up force of waves lashed the island and dug a way into the cliffs; and people believed that the sea-monster lived there.

Fru Elin was not easy in her mind till she heard Gunvor come in at night and go up to her room after saying good-night at the door. Then it was all right, and Fru Elin went to sleep contented.

They had always been accustomed in that family at any time to expect a storm which carried off something with it.

Fru Elin considered that things had gone

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well. The storm had carried off what she was not sorry to lose.

A week later there was a wedding at Haero. But the strange part of it was that the bride of Dr. Torgersen was not Gunvor Thorsdatter, but Irmild Myrland, the sea-waif.

This caused a great deal of talk, of course. People said it was wonderful that they had been so good to Irmild at Haero and that they had made her turn out so well that she could be just like a great lady herself. But what they could not possibly understand, was the fact that Gunvor of Haero had given up to her her own doctor, who was as eligible and as good a man as one could meet with.

It baffled everyone; there had been no unfriendliness between them, as Gunvor had herself managed everything, and done it in the handsomest manner. And they were not to leave Haero either; they were to live at Kirkodden until the doctor's house could be enlarged.

In the upper circles this was the chief subject of conversation until more important things cropped up.

Fru Jeannette was to go to a sanatorium in Jemterand, and Theodor wanted her to go into Trondhjem to get some new dresses.

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The equerry's widow was entirely occupied by her own affairs, for, of course, there must be an explanation forthcoming some time. She made a trip of a few days among the isles with the sheriff's family and the judge; the latter had been so affable in his manner generally that even the old sheriff had become fond of him. When she came back from this voyage everybody thought that she looked younger, and she smiled and passed it off with a joke: "That comes of being out on bright summer nights!" The widow understood quite well how Dr. Torgersen's marriage had come about. And she was very glad for Gunvor to experience this, and hoped with all her heart that it had affected her more deeply than one could see. For really one *could* get annoyed with the Haero family; they always looked as if nothing had happened. Fru Elin seemed almost to consider the affair a happy event in the household.

Later on in the autumn the talk began again, for, early in October, young Fru Torgersen had a son, to the great surprise of most people.

They talked, and well they might! They thought that the little one had come to them as a present for the common topic of the season. The cottage people were always the

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first to stop talking about such a thing. Firstly, people had more to do there and did not stop to consider, and, secondly, they had not so great a talent for being morally agitated as those in better houses.

However, in the better houses people were not discussing it for long. There was so much other corruption that they could not let pass uncriticised; and then there were other subjects too—the fish, and the price of herring, and politics, and religious questions.

Svein Torgersen was as popular as ever. The fact was, it was very difficult to look down upon Torgersen, for he never noticed it. Not even the most exacting ladies could discomfit him.

He had his own way of disarming them. He had such fine blue eyes, and he used them so gallantly, as if he knew the full extent of their moral excellence and valued it accordingly. Most people did not feel safe enough to venture tackling him, and, besides, it was altogether impossible to feel angry with him. In his nature there was such a glorious indifference, such irresistible good-humour, that it was out of the question.

He looked as if nothing at all had happened, but he was not quite the same man as before; he was not so gay now; he was more moderate

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in every way, and sometimes he was a little irritable.

But what evoked the most surprise was the change that had taken place in Irmild. There were many who would not have recognised her as the Irmild of last year.

She had filled out; her whole expression had changed, even her features were not the same. The mouth that used to be so mobile was now at rest, as if in deep content; the nose had lost its childish, soft outline, and the quivering nostrils had found peace. Into the eyes there had come quite a new expression; they were a trifle dreamy, but exceedingly contented. There was something about her that suggested a tree stripped of its fruit.

When she was in company she sat among the married ladies, knitting slowly and languidly with her long, soft fingers.

People always knew where to find her now, for she was often to be seen sitting in the same place for hours. It was as if she were resting after effort.

Whether they wanted to or not they were obliged to confess that she made a very good and domesticated little wife. Dr. Torgersen was fortunate in marrying her. At least, this was the rector's opinion.



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Autumn was developing more and more fully as each day passed. From the land there had collected great flocks of birds, which were driven out to sea. The sun set earlier each day; it shone with but a feeble glow, but at night it sank into the sea, blood-red.

The weather for a long time had been unusually fine, but then the south-west wind came one night unexpectedly, and a schooner ran aground out at Utskjoer, not far from Haero. It had struck on a submerged rock and sank soon afterwards. True, the crew had got safely ashore, but now they were lying quite helpless in some small fishermen's cottages out there. Food and clothes had been sent to them from Haero, and Dr. Torgersen had visited them a few times.

One day a fisherman came with the message that they were in urgent need and wanted the doctor; they had neither food nor medicine, and Per Utskjoer could not stand them any longer, for they were beginning to practise witchcraft.

Dr. Torgersen was not at home; Irmild sent the message on to Haero, and in a very short time Gunvor's boat was got ready for a journey. It lay rocking outside

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the boat-house, when Anders Halskar carried down clothes and food into it.

He looked about, turned his quid of tobacco, and spat on the ground. "The sheep are down at the shore to-day eating seaweed; they expect snow," he said. He spat again and put his hands into his pockets. "I can hear the roar of the waves in the west; that is not a good omen!"

Ezekiel was standing on the edge of the bridge. He did not answer; he was looking angry. He had offered to go, but Gunvor had not wanted him.

They could not get away to Utskjoer yet, however, for the tide was out and would not come in for some hours. When he could start, Anders was to take the boat to Lundodden.

Gunvor had gone there by land and would meet him. She wanted to go to the Myrland cottages to look after some sick persons. When she had left them and walked to the headland the boat had not yet arrived. She looked at her watch; it was still an hour to the time when the current would serve.

Darkness was coming on. She began to walk up and down the road, but found that she was tired, and she sat down on

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a rock. In front of her was the judge's house. She saw lights lit in the study and in the sitting-room.

She rose and went nearer. She saw Falck standing in the room with his back to the stove and shivering, as if with cold, though it was so mild this evening as to be almost sultry enough to bode a storm. He looked unhappy.

With a sudden impulse she turned round and went into the courtyard and up the steps. The door was not fastened. She went in, straight on to the door of the room, knocked, and entered.

He drew back, and the colour fled from his face. He looked at her in silence.

A black shawl was thrown over her head, and the dark, thick hair fell down a little over the forehead. Round her eyes were dark shadows which made the warm paleness of her face more marked.

"Good evening!" she said huskily.

He went up and took her hand. "Is it you!" he answered softly.

"Yes," she whispered, and went up to the open, blazing fire. She stood there warming herself. "I feel cold, too!" she said, smiling, and she shut her eyes for a moment.

It was good to stand here and imagine

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that she had come home at last, that she should never feel cold any more, never more feel hunger or thirst!

“Let me take off your cloak,” he asked softly.

“It is not so strange then—my coming was not a mistake; it is as it ought to be,” she thought.

“When you are sitting like that without your cloak, it looks as if you did not mean to go away again!” he said, as he put forward a chair for her.

She took it, and he sat down opposite to her. She leaned a little towards him. Her eyes shone with quiet ardour.

“It is so pleasant here!” she said slowly.

He bent down, turned over the pieces of peat and moved back a little into the shadow.

“How delightful it is here!” she whispered again, half-smiling. “How nice it is to come in here, and to see you, Edmund!” She looked up to him in a moment’s rapture, as if she could not control herself. “How glad I am that you are here—how glad I am I have known you—I bless you for coming here!” She whispered it, smiling, in a half-absent way. Then she sank into deep thought.

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Falck's eyes were glowing, but he would not disturb her.

She held her chin in her hand and leaned forward as if to support herself. When she looked up again there was a dreamy triumph in her glance.

"It seems to me so light and lofty here. It is like a church!" she thought.

Falck had tears in his eyes. That she had called him by his name for the first time, that, he thought, was enough to give him courage and strength; he felt like the paralytic man who could rise up and walk. After this all would be possible!

She had folded her hands and was looking straight in front of her.

"It is like a church here—a temple wherein no one has yet set foot! But I have drawn the shoes from off my feet and stolen in. And I have been waited for!"

Falck wanted to go up to her, but he dared not rise. He was held still by a charm which he could not break.

She looked towards him, smiling.

"It is so lofty and silent here. It is only you who could raise a temple so high about me. I will tell you how I felt when I came in: I felt as if I were in church when the mass was being read! And white

## Afterwards—Rest

wings beat! And the chant rose: *Holy, holy, holy!*”

Her eyes shone towards him; they held him, pressed him down. A soul looked out, radiant as fire, prepared for the great day.

Falck rose with an effort of will.

“Gunvor!” he said, trembling both with joy and anguish, “is it true that you are here? Are you demented, or am I?”

She pulled herself together violently, and rose again.

“No,” she said, with a forced smile. “It is I! I thought it was summer here—but instead there is winter and darkness!”

Her voice had grown sad. She rose and crossed the room. The door of the study was open.

Falck rose quickly and took her hand to prevent her, but she was already standing on the threshold.

“Do you want to go in there?” he asked, uncertain.

“Yes,” she whispered, and something in her voice had died out. Her hand was lifeless as it lay in his; her heart was filled with an icy chill of pain. On the table in front of her a small silver tray was standing with a crystal goblet and a half-emptied bottle. She looked

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round. The door of a book cupboard was open; in there behind the books some bottles could be seen.

Her face flushed a deep red. She suddenly faced him—now, for the first time, she understood that he had been drinking. She went up quickly and took hold of the heavy, finely cut baccarat glass. In the light of the big lamp the wine shone clear. She went to the open window and threw out the glass; then she shut the window and pulled down the blind.

“That was all I wanted,” she said unsteadily. “I wanted to see if you—to see—how you were getting on.”

Falck had stood for a moment like one petrified. Then he was overwhelmed with joy at what she had done; and in his eagerness he took the bottle, and the tray, too—why not throw it all away?

But he stopped and put it back again. He leaned against the table and held his hand over his eyes. He must think it over first: this sudden flash of anger, this noble heart's passionate pity! It opened to him the vista of a future such as he could not endure. He must save himself from this! Of course, he was no idiot; of course, he knew his own nature with all its impulses towards

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good and evil. Besides, every being was endowed with a power that would lead him to future corruption, and his had already exercised a certain force. It would avenge itself if he disregarded it.

What could he do? It would be best to save himself—to put another complexion on it all, make it appear as the effects of evening, a slight attack of sentimentality! “Oh, it is not worth the trouble—to make oneself just what one is wanted to be. You see,” he said, “my mother she would have had me a John the Baptist clothed in camel’s hair—I should never have tasted wine! But it is very difficult to do always what one is wanted to do.” He tried to talk as if the matter were a joke—it was his universal remedy.

She was not thinking of what he was saying. She had again gone back into the parlour and up to the fire. There she was warming herself as if she felt cold. Now she turned round to him. Her expression was once more calm, her face was quite pale, and a sad sweetness had come into her voice. “It is my own self that is so difficult—the fact that I cannot be otherwise than I am. I can help others, but I can do nothing for you and myself. You must forgive me, that I am like this. I am at



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my hardest in dealing with myself and you." She looked at him with a quiet mildness in her glance and went on: "Somebody ought to come here—somebody with a gentle touch! My touch is not gentle; I should do you harm—nobody must come and do you harm!"

An expression of pain passed over Falck's face. It must not be taken in this way. Why should he break her heart? He was not going to do that.

It was absolutely necessary to take it humorously.

"I say," he said obstinately, "that it is difficult to become just what people will force one to become! I was destined by my mother for a John the Baptist, but to be that, I tell you frankly, is impossible in our climate! You must remember that the glacial period is not yet past; till we have recovered the original condition of heat it will be impossible to become anything." And he went on talking in his usual manner. If he could only make her see things a little more from the humorous side they might be saved.

It seemed as if he might succeed, for suddenly she laughed.

"Yes, perhaps strong measures *are* necessary

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to made a modern man pull himself together—a volcanic eruption probably. What do you think?”

He was very pleased at the turn things had taken. “Yes,” he said; “who knows? One ought to be turned inside out, upside down: that’s the truth!”

She, too, laughed at this; she looked up at him and measured him with her eyes. “Yes, it certainly needs something terrible to——”

She stopped. Her voice had again grown husky and it failed her now. A dull, thunderous roll of sound broke in upon them. It was the voice of the waves; the sea had become rougher. Both listened.

“It is winter!” said Gunvor, with sudden horror. “Now it has come.”

She raised both her hands and pressed them to her forehead.

Falck went on as before. “What is that to you?” he said. “You are not a person of to-day. You are as one belonging to the far-off future, who always will be on the highest step. And the winter! I consider that an excellent institution for the people of the present day. It is so kind and indulgent; it never notes our many slips——”

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She looked at him, and all at once he stopped.

"But I'll tell you one thing," he began in another tone, "of course we are weak, and in my case nothing can be done, but if you have any fault it is that you are too strong; it is not well to be that."

An expression came into her eyes which killed the smile on his mouth—it told of a wild, mute sorrow.

She was leaning against a chair; her voice trembled, and she grew paler as she spoke: "The worst of it is that I am not strong. To win happiness one needs a strength which he who has suffered much can never have. There are so few people who can be happy—they have suffered too much!" She looked at him steadily. "I know," she went on, "you are frightened of me! You want the right of being another man to-morrow; you want to be free from any responsibility for what you have said to-day. . . . And you are frightened of yourself! And I cannot save you from yourself. You think that I am growing indifferent," she added slowly; "I know it! It was always so; when I was a child and had to set my teeth hard to keep from breaking down—it was always so! But you must not trouble

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about all this! I don't want you to suffer. If someone with a gentle touch could come and do all that I cannot . . ."

She took a step towards him.

"You look so surprised at what I am saying," she said; "you don't like my taking it so seriously. You are not pleased because I do not joke and laugh and take it in a sensible manner."

Falck tried to say something philosophical. "Yes, as you say, if we could only be sensible we could surely do the impossible, couldn't we?"

She understood what he meant and looked at him for a moment. Then she smiled, with her little contemptuous shrug of the shoulders.

"Isn't it funny? I want the sun in the sky and you offer me a little copper coin instead!"

She took a few steps forward; she looked terribly tired.

She stopped again: "But should we not feel glad to think that some time there will be more sun? It is the sun which makes one strong."

Falck went up to her. It was a relief to him that she had turned the conversation into a more ordinary channel.

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"Yes," he said, "but, as a matter of fact, does it ever come—this warm sunshine which makes people so strong?"

Her eyes flamed up. "It will come! And let us be glad that some time there will be people who grow strong because the day is bright, and because there is no fear to rob them of the light-given strength."

"But," he replied, "when people are so strong—do you think then they can take the sun of the heavens, as you express it, and dare to ask from each other. . . ."

She bent her head slowly: "They will find each other sufficient when they have learnt to esteem their hearts above all else." She sat down in the chair she had been leaning against and rocked to and fro.

Falck thought she was crying and went up to her anxiously. But she did not answer his question.

He knelt beside her: "Gunvor, you must answer, are you ill?"

She raised her head, smiling: "Ah! now it is over!" she said.

She spoke slowly, as if she had been seeking for the words.

A gust of wind just then shook the house, and she sprang up.

"The wind is calling me, I hear. Outside

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all is well; from my childhood it was always the best place for me.”

She pressed her hands to her forehead. There was something she had forgotten. Now she remembered, snatched up her cloak, and gasped piteously: “The boat! The people out there who are starving to death! And I could forget them! Do you hear? They are waiting—now I will go to them. I shall stay here no longer. I do you no good; it will be better for you if I go away.”

She took his hand, leaned forward, and sweetly and tenderly she placed her cheek against his; then she pushed him gently back and ran out.

He stood for a moment as if he did not understand what had happened; then he rushed after her.

“You must not go!” he cried. “I think there is a storm coming on.”

But she had gone, and he could not see her boat near the shore.

He went in again. She could not have gone out on the water.

He paced up and down, waiting. He was so certain she would come back again. An hour passed. He stopped his walk. She would not come back! What an idiot he

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was to stay waiting there! He ought to have gone after her at once and forced her to come in again and receive him, wretch though he was, forced her to believe that all his best intentions would not fail.

He laughed. He must perforce laugh at himself.

The loud voices from the sea broke in upon him. He could hear the deep roar of the waves. The sound came straight into the room to him.

He went down to the men-servants. The boys had gone to bed; only old Aron was sitting by the fire, mending a net. Aron raised his shaggy head and looked curiously at the judge with his quick, deep-set, crafty eyes. "I think we are going to have a bad storm to-night," he said, nodding and tying a knot. "It will be very rough out on the sea; the sea-wren is crying; it is a cry of fear. We are going to have foul weather." He passed his hand over his mouth as if in preparation and began again: "I tell you what, Judge, it is the south-west wind that is the worst—ay, the very worst. When it comes rushing down the mountain-side like that, there is no power of reasoning can make it safe for fishers out at sea. But, then, there is the Gulf Stream—ay,

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that is sent by God. Everyone knows, of course, the difference this current makes—what safeguard it affords to the poor fishers.”

And Aron talked on, for he would show the judge what a knowing man he was; he was certainly not stupid, and he knew his own business rather well.

The judge had departed unobserved. He had returned to his own quarters and was pacing up and down.

Of course she could not have gone out to sea!

But she had left him very hurriedly. Sometimes she was like that; she acted very unexpectedly at times—just like the weather.

But it would pass. He felt sure that it would pass at once; she always repented. . . . Who had, on the whole, such an even temper as she, and who could be so bright in the middle of winter?

He heard the winds outside: the winds and the night, what did they whisper of?

Should he go after her, searching until he found her?—for he must find her at last!

But he could not decide whether to go or not.

He had been drinking, that was the fact



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of the matter ! And now she had gone, and he would be plagued by his indecision of mind till it would be too late to find her. It was always so with him when he had drunk too much ; it was as if the nerve that should rouse him to activity was paralysed. He could never start, and the longer he delayed, the more painful it was. He saw her eyes, as they looked a few minutes ago, clear and sad. They had glanced apprehensively round the room ; they sought for the root of the evil. At last she had come upon that which had been his undoing ! She had destroyed it ; he was saved !

The house was shaken by a gust of wind. It was the south-west. It made the old window rattle and shake ; the door shut with a bang.

He was seized with a violent fit of remorseful anxiety, but he still stood irresolute. He could shoot himself for having let her go !

But was it not always so with him ? Oh, the comfort of a strenuous life ! It was indeed very difficult to be what others desired one to be ! Why had he followed these courses ? It had never been his mother's desire for him.

He listened to the sound outside. It

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was the sea-wrack. Why did it cry so weirdly?

He felt a stifling anxiety, a painful pressure on his chest. He was still standing. He made an effort to think of something else.

Here she had stood while he tortured her by his wretched trifling with the ways of life, and from that spot she had looked into his soul and seen what a coward he was. And he had offered her that! He saw her standing there looking at him with deep, serious eyes—and the desire had come to him to torture her as a punishment for expecting so much from him, and because he knew her great heart's love of truth, and knew, too, how sensitive it was! Suppose she had gone by the road through the forest in this darkness! She might lose the way and weary herself to death; she might wander out on to the mountain. He paced the room restlessly, listening to the mysterious creaking sounds in the old house. The storm had come on. . . . And he had been so confused that he had let her go out alone into the night! He had always suspected that there was no such thing as mercy. Not even a merciful chance had come to his aid! So she also had left him as soon as she had understood that he had been drinking.

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He sat down near the door like a stranger, and looked round. His hands grew cold and damp.

He realised that a terrible storm was coming on; the wind howled and whistled, and the sea lashed the shore in long, soughing waves of sound.

The sweat dropped from his forehead. He fancied that he was out in the storm; he felt the waves over him; he was caught by the foaming current and dragged down. An icy coldness crept over him—a feeling that only his heart lived; that everything else was dead.

Again a shriek was heard. This time it was not the sea-wrack, neither the wind, nor the waves.

Instantly he rose, perfectly clear-headed. He was ready for action, and he knew what he ought to do.

He ran out into the hall and put something on. In a moment he was out and calling to the servants. They had heard the shriek and were already up. Søren was standing on the steps, putting on a sou'wester; soon after Iver came out, accompanied by Aron, who was carrying a pail, and a moment later all the men were down on the shore.

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The wind came in sudden squalls from Katt-tinderne and whistled in the men's ears. The sky was overcast. At that moment a gust blew down upon them at the water's edge like a heavy, wet blanket.

Søren arranged the boards, laid a couple of heavy stones on them as a precaution against the rocking of the sea, and took the helm.

"It looks ominously white out there! But the wind is never as dangerous as it sounds," he said hopefully.

Falck was watching the effect of the squalls on the black edge of the water.

How the wind shrieked! It was flood-tide; icy-cold gusts blew upon them, and flashes of lightning shone between the rocks.

They got out a little way. The lines of the shore could be seen like a black wall on the grey background. The first waves entered the boat. The judge and Aron had enough to do to bail out the water.

"There is a capsized boat here alee; two men overboard!" Iver cried suddenly from the stern.

"God help them!" said Aron huskily.

They steered for the place. Falck stared at the wrecked boat as they were nearing it. His expression had altered completely.

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the eyes were sharp and keen as those of an eagle.

“Down with the sail!” said the master, and the speed slackened. There were the men. A head appeared above water just beside the boat, a hand caught at the boat’s edge—and, farther out, another man was struggling desperately. He caught hold of the oar that was passed over to him. Falck hauled him in, and gripping his collar drew him up into the boat. The other one had been secured by Iver.

“Up with the sail!” cried Søren sharply.

The boat just then gave a lurch and the water ran over it, icy-cold; it narrowly escaped the next breaker that would have filled it.

“God be praised and glorified!” said Aron solemnly; “now I think we shall get safely to shore.”

The judge did not notice that he was wet through; he felt as if younger and warmer blood ran in his veins. When Aron thanked God he folded his hands in heartfelt gratitude that it had not happened to her. Of course, she would be at Haero now—at midnight. He took off his coat and wrapped it round the two men whom they had rescued from the sea. They were

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fishermen from the interior of the island. One had lost consciousness, the other was speechless.

But as soon as they had come ashore and had been taken up into the house and cared for, they rapidly recovered and began to talk. They had seen several boats out there before the storm, afraid of going in, waiting for the dawn; but they had not been far out, so they had thought they would clear themselves ere the storm came on. They did not know at all how it happened. They had heard a sudden squall, seen the mast fall, and then, all at once, they had felt horribly wet and cold, as if they were going to choke. . . . And the sea raged like a thunderstorm around them—yes, they had had to struggle for life. But it had been decreed that they should not perish this time. Yes, indeed! They had seen the Haero boat last night; they had just wondered where it was going.

The judge had been listening to them. Now he rose and sent them to bed; they needed rest, and his men too. Then he went up into the room where she had lately been . . . he sat down on the chair where she had been sitting.

The storm must leave off some time. Day

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would come, and certainty, and an end to this fear.

He was still sitting there when Tonetta came in with the coffee. She stopped in the middle of the floor. "Why, you are already dressed, sir! What dreadful stormy weather it has been to-night. Yes, very sad for the poor fishermen! But, thank God, the worst is over; it is fine again now!"

Falck nodded. "You may put it there!" he said in a strange voice.

Tonetta shot an inquiring glance at him and went out. Perhaps he felt lonely. Miss Yoñs was probably staying too long at Trondhjem.

He took up his cap—first, he must go to Haero! He checked himself. No, first he went to the bureau, quickly wrote a few lines, sealed the letter and put it with the others. It was to Mina Yoñs. He would compensate her, but never more should she put foot inside his house.

A tap was heard at his door. Little Gunn looked in.

"Good morning!" she nodded, and came in. "Wasn't it dreadful last night?" she said. "I couldn't sleep, for everybody was awake and they were banging the doors. I have come to see if Mother

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Gunvor is here; Grandmother has gone to look for her, and I am looking for her too. . . . That's Boot Tobine singing; she says it is the right kind of weather for it, and she says that Mother Gunvor is with you. Is she?"

Falck was standing with his hand on the back of the chair. His face grew pale. She hung coaxingly on his arm. He looked into the anxious sweetness of her eyes, dazed and absent.

She went on eagerly: "Do you know, Tobine said, when we were nearly dead with wet and cold, that it was best to go to you, and she says we should make haste to die, so that we may see God and the angels, and what they do. . . . Are you curious? Boot Tobine is so fearfully curious, you know—but do you think it would be dangerous? do you think Mother Gunvor would allow me?" She turned round and waited sadly: "I am waiting for Mother Gunvor, that's only Tobine. Do you hear what she is singing?" She nodded and hummed the refrain in her childish alto:—

"For men must work and women must weep."

She broke off and looked up at him. "I



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can repeat it all without saying my 'r's' wrong hardly at all," she said. She climbed up into the chair at Falck's writing-table, and nestled into it as if to hide herself, and then she began again, fresh and buoyant as a bird:—

"For men must work and women must weep,  
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep,  
And good-bye to the bar and its moaning,  
Good-bye to the bar and its moaning."

Falck had gone out. She had fallen asleep in the chair.

An hour afterwards he returned. He had been to Haero. Several boats had put out to search. Fru Elin had gone in the last one. And he had walked through the forest; she might be there, he thought.

Then it occurred to him that it was possible she might be at The Grove—anything, rather than the thought of the worst that might have happened. And he had hurried back and looked all over the house. He searched the room, where he had seen her last; he went about it like a madman, looking behind chairs and curtains.

Then he caught sight of the child, who had just waked up. He went up to her

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quickly and knelt down. "Do you see your Mother Gunvor?" he asked beseechingly; "I can't find her. Tell me if you can see her standing there. . . . There she was, there!" He bent his head over the child's feet. "Forgive me! If you were with me I should never sin any more! I promise you, I will never sin any more!"

Little Gunn laughed and drew her feet in. "I know that, for you are the judge," she said. She wanted to get down. "May I see all the nice things?" she asked.

He got up quickly, opened one of the book-cases and took out some bottles from inside the row of books, went to the window, opened it, and threw them out.

Little Gunn looked amazed at first; then she became enchanted with the game, and clapped her hands, laughing.

"Oh, let me try," she cried eagerly, and ran forward.

She became quite breathless with the exertion of throwing far out beyond the gravel the bottles he handed to her.

"More!" she demanded; "it's so awfully pretty and red—and there is a green stream; let me have some more green ones, do you hear? And the yellow ones are like the

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flowers that grow in the sand! Have you any more behind there, do you think?"

A knock was heard at the door. It was Mother Elin, who came in, upright as usual, but paler and with something hard in her face.

Falck stood looking at her as if petrified. Now he knew everything. All at once he shrank together and looked smaller.

Little Gunn turned round quite happy: "We are tidying the room," she cried; "there are so many bottles in there behind the books, and that's so ugly!" She stopped, frightened by the serious look on Fru Elin's face. She ran forward to bury her head in her grandmother's skirts.

Fru Elin took her by the hand and went up to Falck.

"Anders Halskar and good John were brought to land here; it was better to land here. They are in the men's room," she said. Her voice was as calm as usual but slower, as if she had difficulty in getting out the words. Then she continued: "A breaker came and filled the boat. They were sitting at the bottom. At last help came. But they had to do as she wanted—take Anders first and then the boy. She was holding him—and so it was a little too late——"

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Falck wanted to say something, but could not. He stretched out his hands to her entreatingly.

She did not notice it. She wanted to go on with her story, and began again: "They know where she is; the whirl drew her into the cleft—no one dared to go in there. No one can do that but Ezekiel, and now he has gone. He will take her out!"

Falck knelt down beside her.

She did not notice him. She sat down in the nearest chair. Little Gunn had begun to cry. She took her up into her arms. By chance her eyes fell on Falck, then she looked round the room, noticed the bits of broken glass and something like a pool of blood at the window, and glanced again at him as indifferently as before.

"You have been a miserable man!" she said slowly. "When happiness comes to such a one as you, it is obliged to go away again. It would be good if people could learn to use their happiness."

There was silence for a few minutes.

Little Gunn had gone to sleep again. The room breathed solemnity in the silence. It was as if the atmosphere had changed, as if something had entered into the old furniture and pictures, something that would never

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leave them. Only the venerable timepiece went on as if nothing had happened. It ticked gently and confidently, and announced with a silvery sweetness in its tone that a quarter of an hour had passed.

Fru Elin sat quite still for a while, gazing in front of her.

There was something else she had to say. She began again. It was as if she were speaking to herself: "I had almost thought of saying I was tired—but now a day of real work must begin!

"Now she sleeps the long, calm sleep that no one can disturb. I thought it would be my turn first, I, who have held out for so many sleepless nights. . . . Death once came to me too, but not further than the threshold, for I said: 'You must wait; I am not yet ready!' Then he went away again. But now, when I thought it would be good to go away, I am not ready! Perhaps she needed to get peace first! 'I am not so strong as you, mother,' she used to say. . . . She suffered more than I knew, for she bore everything well. The Haero women have always done that! . . . Lately, I have understood better, but I have said nothing. Last night someone appeared to me. I sat up and asked who it was. I found that it was Death, who

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stood there beckoning . . . for there is always a message sent when one of the Haero family is to die. ‘Yes, come!’ I said. I thought it was I who was called; I thought it was my turn to rest in peace. But after all it was she who was wanted! I cannot complain. She was only lent to me to help me bear my meed of troubles. . . . She slept little the last week. I heard her pacing her room, very slowly, that no one might hear her. But in the daytime she was so cheerful and gracious! Her mother was too old and weather-beaten and dull—she was not equal to this. So she let herself be deceived. . . .

“But if you needed rest, then it was good for you to be allowed to sleep!

“Thank God! Praise Him for it! . . .

“And have no care for us, no fears for the work that remains! Sleep, sleep in peace! . . . Now death must wait awhile for me, until another Gunvor takes her place! . . .”

Falck had risen and was standing in front of her.

It was as if a requiem had been sung, a sweet memorial ode, consoling him, melting deep remorse into despair and grief.

He burst into tears.

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Fru Elin also rose. It had been good to her to speak out. Her eyes were mild and sad in spite of all their strength. The hardness had left her face. She went up and gave him her hand.

He kissed it.

"Forgive me!" he whispered in a broken voice. He knew she understood what he was feeling. "Mother Elin!" he asked, "let us share the work she left."

She nodded.

"And now I'm waiting," she said, "I'm waiting for her! Ezekiel will never come back without her. Out on Stenholmen she shall be buried. She chose that place once long ago. It shall be done. She shall have her desire."

Little Gunn had been looking at them, not quite awake at first. She did not understand why Falck was so sad. While Fru Elin was putting on her outdoor things she stole up to him, climbed up on to the chair, and threw her arms round his neck.

"I forgot something that Mother Gunvor said," she whispered softly, dazed with sleep; "that time, you know, when I would not speak to you, she said then that I should have gone up and clasped you round the

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neck with both my arms. I will do it now instead!"

Falck bent his head to her with joy in his heart.

It was a caress that *she* had given him after death. She had sent an angel to comfort him.

And now there was no longer a shadow between them. She had seen that he loved her in spite of all!

Fru Elin called him from outside. He took the child in his arms and followed her.

At Haero all went about their work in silence. Those who came by sea fastened their boats without a sound and stole up the steps. In the shop people weighed and measured, but none spoke. The day passed. Soon Fru Elin was the only one who had any hope of Ezekiel returning. She had at once sent men to the islet to blast the rock. She heard with satisfaction how well the gunpowder exploded with boom and thunder.

Fru Elin did not seem to be so very deaf, for no one but she could hear the sound of oars down at the bridge that night.

All was ready in the new wing, where she was to have gone at midsummer. Lights were placed in the hall.



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Now she would come. Dressed as a bride she would come.

Falck slept that night in the other wing. He was not to know anything ere she had been brought up there. However, he came down to the bridge. He wanted to carry her.

But Ezekiel said no. His eyes shone with a kind of wild joy. He had been in the whirlpool to fetch her, and Death had gripped him by the shoulder—but Death was obliged to let him go, for Ezekiel had to take her home to her mother. . . .

Into the new hall she was brought. She was to lie on her own soft bed. Fru Elin and Aunt Vikka had prepared the bed and were busy about her. In the room underneath lay Irmild, convulsed with sobs.

Ezekiel was standing nearest to her. With a dark, triumphant gaze he looked down on Falck and Torgersen, who were standing at a distance, red-eyed with grief. He knew in his heart that it was the two strange men who had given her her death, and now it seemed to him that he was nearer to her than either of them.

Fru Elin was doing little things about her bed and talking to her: "I was longing for you to come. I knew you would come back

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to your old mother, and that we should be allowed to say good-bye to each other. . . . And here you are, quiet and at peace! Here is the big velvet coverlet which you shall take with you, for I remember you did not like the cold, white draperies. It will be a fitting place for you out there at Stenholmen. You shall be alone there; it shall be your islet! No one shall come to disturb you there! . . .” She asked the others to go down to fetch something.

She and Falck were left alone. Then she beckoned to him to come up to her.

He went up silently. They stood, one on each side of the bed, looking at her.

On her forehead lay its usual clear expression; it was as if the closed, sunken eyes would open and smile upon them; but round her lips there was a look of weariness.

Falck suddenly turned away and burst into tears. He had never seen such utter weariness in the face of any human being.

“You see, she needs peace,” Fru Elin murmured. Her lips began to tremble. Then she said shortly: “I cannot possibly stand here as if there were nothing to do outside. You can stay here a little, Edmund!” She nodded to him and left the room.

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That she had begun to call him Edmund was a great comfort to him. It seemed to grant him permission to take *her* empty place. . . . So short a time ago she was here, filling it herself! He fancied he still felt the warmth of her being, the effect of her presence, in the air here. She had so lately been here!

He could not go home to his room, where she had been last; he was filled with horror at the thought of re-entering it. All that winter he lived at Haero.

South-western gales again raged off the coast. They started with new strength each day. Winter had come, and with it the strange voices of the night.

Those suffered most who sat in silent anguish under cottage eaves, awaiting fate. The wind recked not of that.

At one time days would pass with only light south-western gales, but towards evening-time their force would grow, till the foam splashed up to the walls of the houses, and fell with a wail on the turf thatch.

In every cottage sat someone who waited and listened in patience, through clamour of storm and of waves, for the sound of a boat brought to land or the tramp of a man in wet sea-boots.

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Wonderful thoughts came to those who sat at home waiting; they found it a comfort to think that no man could die except by the will of God.

And it was a comfort to the more dull-minded amongst them to go out to church on a Sunday and see others praying there with them. When they were many together, their prayers would be stronger. Then perhaps He would listen to them—*He* who could govern the storm and work good to all things!

It was well that the ceilings were low and the rooms were narrow beneath, for one wanted a shelter to hide in and a resting-place where the stern grandeur outside found no reflection.

It was a matter of wonder to all that The Lord had called home Gunvor of Haero. They did not see that He had done it so that they might always have her with them—that she might never leave them more.

In the small cottages round about the people believed that she was still among them. When a question arose for decision, there was always someone who could tell what *she* would have done; and this happened not seldom. They all thought there was

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greater reason than ever for fulfilling her wishes.

And in dark hours they most distinctly realised that she was with them as before. She came uncalled for, through closed doors, and helped them to hold out.

She left, as it were, footprints after her in their hearts and minds. The mothers told their children about her, that they might learn to do her wishes.

And when the fishermen lay out there on the shoals, of a surety they spoke of Gunvor of Haero, who had loved poor fishers and their children, and at last had died for them. Many a time the new hired-men, who had not fished up in the North before, asked to be told the story of Gunvor of Haero, and liked it better than the common talk among most men. The usual fishers' yarns might be amusing for the time, but this tale was one that could not be forgotten, and would be welcomed, too, by wife and child at home.

And the thought that she was with them was a pleasant one to all. At Stenholmen she rested in great peace; all things were seemly and well-fitting for her there: the room she lay in—cut in the cliff-side—held her warm and safe. Neither had she

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arrived at this new home undowered, for beside her were the heavy silver candlesticks she brought from Haero. She lived, as it were, in a royal castle, whence she governed both land and sea. For, whatever a stranger may think, it is true that the course of the current at Smalsund-et was altered after the night that Gunvor of Haero was drowned there.

It had become so calm and so easy to pass through that no longer did men take precautions, and though the south-west was capricious this season, it was a certain fact that it never blew hard in its old way into Smalsund-et. It was just as if she were there herself and kept watch, so that no fishermen might perish at that place again.

One night when there had been a shipwreck beyond and the wreck came drifting in, it drove into the only small bay at Stenholmen where it was possible to land, and all the men saved themselves on the cliff-side. It could not be denied that there were people who thought that that incident had something to do with *her*. . . .

Many an honest fisherman lifts his hat when he passes Stenholmen. The eyes of all in the boat turn towards it, for all

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have something to thank for. The taciturn, sombre-faced men with thoughtful eyes and quiet movements—their secret life of thought she knew, and she taught them to find out the way wherein they should wander.

In summer Stenholmen lies bright in the sun. There are veins of marble in the stone there; it makes the eyes ache to look at it in the strong light. Many flowers grow on the island: lilies of the valley and big bluebells—bigger than any found elsewhere. They shoot up high and look out on the surging water. They smile to the sun, and they ring so gently and sweetly that all other flowers stop to listen, as well as the green blades of grass and the flocks of white sea-birds—for from the sunny blue flower-bells is rung out a song full of life's wisdom.

Great flocks of white sea-gulls live at Stenholmen. They are left in peace. Never is an egg taken there. If you wanted someone to do it, you would find none ready or willing to take her birds and their eggs. And nobody picks her flowers.

On a Sunday in calm weather boats sometimes put in under the islet; but no one goes ashore.

For when Stenholmen is lying bright as

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gold in the sun, it radiates full, sublime peace, as if from God's kingdom.

But even in winter when the sea foretells storm and the air is heavy and dark, then it is well that Stenholmen is there, for it stands in the way of the storm coming in from the open sea; many a boat has it saved.

Often those who sit at home waiting find comfort in the thought that Gunvor of Haero is sitting out there keeping watch over every fisherman's life.

When the judge comes home from his journeys—and he is no longer anxious to go out—he always steers as near the islet as possible, and he gazes as if he expects to see her up there. The boatman thinks that if anyone is superstitious the judge is.

He is not quite sure that she does not sometimes come out to meet him. Once, when they were talking together, she had said that if death only brought to her freedom, then she would come again.

In the air, in the waves of the sea . . . in the trees and the flowers! She would borrow their voices and come back to all that she loved, to all people who wanted her help.

What if he thinks now that he feels her hand on his forehead and hears her whisper



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in his ear? What if he feels in his heart that she is still near him?

She appears at home in his room. He sees her sometimes when the night is half-dark and the stars are veiled; then she stands up in the place where she told him: "It will be better for you if I go away!" He hears her saying it as she did then, with infinite melancholy, solemnly as a prophetess; and the prophecy had come true. Her going away from him had given him the strength to rise up.

His life's greatest humiliation is this, that he had not on the wedding garment when she came to him. He was so mean a creature that he had to lose her to save what was left of himself.

"It will be better for you if I go away." Those words had made the world blank before him, but they were his religion. They had saved him, and they were bringing him further forward on the road.

She had uttered it as if it were a cry of woe. She had always been tortured with the thought that people had to suffer so much. "It is not necessary," she had said.

They must learn to listen better and to know the time of their visitation. It should not be for ever hidden from their eyes! Then

the patient's medical history, physical examination, and laboratory and imaging studies.

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